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Odisha villagers demand justice as they cremate student's body

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Archer was bowling to avenge Ganguly's shirt swinging celebrations

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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No link between Covid vaccine and heart deaths: Govt

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

Karnataka Minister for Medical Education Sharanprakash Patil on Tuesday said there has been no rise in cardiac deaths or hospital admissions in the State, vis-a-vis Covid-19 vaccination, adding that there was no need for panic. His remarks come after there was a reported surge in heart-related deaths in Hassan district. Speaking at press conference, Patil highlighted the findings of two reports initiated by the State government. However, he said that post-Covid lifestyle changes have led to a rise in diabetes and blood pressure cases, which may have contributed to the deaths. "Dietary habits have changed and stress levels have upped," he said. *—PTI*

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34 WB fishermen detained in Bangladesh

KOLKATA, 15 JULY

Thirty-four fishermen from West Bengal were detained by Bangladeshi authorities at the maritime border, their union claimed on Tuesday. The district authorities of South 24 Parganas have been informed about the detention of the fishermen who had gone to the sea from Namkhana on two trawlers, Sundarban Samudrik Matsajibi Shramik Union secretary Satinath Patra said. The two trawlers, FB Jhar and FB Mangalchandi, were detained on 13 July, he said. Patra said fishermen of both countries fish side by side along the maritime border in the Bay of Bengal. "We are hopeful that our government will do whatever is necessary to bring them back," he said. *—PTI*

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Yemen postpones execution of Kerala nurse

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Yemeni authorities have postponed the execution of Nimisha Priya, a Kerala nurse on death row, which was scheduled for 16 July, government sources confirmed on Tuesday. Priya, 38, from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad, was sentenced to death in 2020 by a Yemeni court for the 2017 murder of a Yemeni citizen, Talal Abdo Mahdi. Her appeal was dismissed by Yemen's Supreme Judicial Council in November 2023. Priya is currently imprisoned in Sana'a. Priya had moved to Yemen in 2008 for work and opened a clinic in 2015 with Mahdi. She claims the partnership turned abusive. In an attempt to retrieve her passport, she sedated Mahdi, resulting in his death. *—PTI*

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The majority of farmers resisted the plan, staging continuous protests, including sit-ins outside the Devanahalli taluk office and a large rally on 25 June under the banner of the Samyukta Horata Samiti **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Farmers win as govt scraps Devanahalli land acquisition

The farmers protested against the project for 3 years

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

- Siddaramaiah clarified that landowners who voluntarily offer their land for development would be eligible for either higher compensation or a larger share of the developed land.

In a big victory for farmers, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday announced the withdrawal of the final notification to acquire 1,777 acres of agricultural land in Devanahalli near Kempegowda International Airport. The move follows over three years of protests by farmers opposing the project.

"This is a unique and historic struggle," Siddaramaiah said, adding that the government made its decision after weighing the pros and cons of the proposed industrial area.

The acquisition, under the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development (KIAD) Act, covered land in 13 villages including Palya, Haraluru, Polanahalli, Nalluru, and Cheemachanahalli. The majority of farmers resisted the plan, staging continuous protests, including sit-ins outside the Devanahalli taluk office and a large rally on 25 June under the banner of the Samyukta Horata Samiti. The protest gained momentum with support from groups such as the Samyukta Kisan Morcha.

Siddaramaiah clarified that landowners who voluntarily offer their land for development would be eligible for either higher compensation or a larger share of the developed land. "We will exclude any land whose owners are unwilling to part with it. In fact, we are dropping the entire notification," he reiterated.

The decision applies only to Devanahalli, not to other regions in the state. "The land is actively cultivated and lies in a green belt. It supports the livelihood of many farmers," he explained.

After multiple rounds of consultations with farmers, protestors, and leaders including Food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa, the government chose to cancel the acquisition.

Legal experts from the All India Lawyers Association for Justice (AILAJ) confirmed the government's authority to withdraw the notification under Sections 28(2) and (4) of the KIAD Act, and Section 4 for excluding land from industrial areas.

"There is no legal impediment whatsoever," AILAJ said in a statement. *—PTI*

WHERE ARE GIRLS SAFE?

Bengaluru student raped by 2 lecturers and their friend

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

A college student was allegedly raped by two teachers of a private college in Bengaluru and their friend on multiple occasions.

The trio was arrested following a complaint lodged by the victim with the Karnataka State Women's Commission. The accused are Narendra, a Physics lecturer; Sandeep, a Biology lecturer; and Anup, a friend of the two.

According to the police complaint, Narendra first approached the student under the pretext of sharing academic notes. He then called her to Anup's room in Bengaluru, where he allegedly raped her and threatened her if she told anyone about the rape.

Days later, Sandeep also forced himself on her. When she resisted, he allegedly blackmailed her, claiming to have photos and videos of her with Narendra. He also allegedly raped her at Anup's residence.

Anup, the third accused, is said to have raped the student after threatening her with claims of possessing CCTV footage of her visiting his room.

The sequence of assaults is believed to have taken place over a month ago, but the matter came to light only after the student informed her parents. A formal complaint was then submitted to the Karnataka State Women's Commission. Acting on the commission's directions, the Marathahalli Police registered a First Information Report (FIR) and arrested all three accused. *—Agencies*

The accused are Narendra, a Physics lecturer; Sandeep, a Biology lecturer; and Anup, a friend of the two **PHOTO: X**

EAM meets Chinese Prez, flags terrorism

BEIJING, 15 JULY

On his first visit to China in five years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Chinese President Xi Jinping, amid efforts to stabilise India-China ties post the Ladakh border standoff.

In China for the SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tianjin, Jaishankar apprised Xi of recent bilateral developments. Addressing the conclave, he urged the SCO to remain steadfast in its founding mission against terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Referring to the April 22 Pahalgam attack, he said it was a deliberate attempt to target Kashmir's tourism and sow communal discord. Jaishankar strongly justified India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor, launched on May 7.

He emphasised India's commitment to sovereignty, mutual respect, and territorial integrity—indirectly critiquing China's Belt and Road Initiative. India, he noted, would keep pushing new initiatives within SCO, from startups to digital infrastructure.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with the Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing China **PHOTO: X**

Highlighting rising global instability, Jaishankar called for de-risking international relations and stabilising the global order. He urged enhanced SCO support for Afghanistan and flagged the need for assured transit within SCO territory. With India, China, Russia, Pakistan, and others, the SCO is a growing bloc. Iran joined in 2023, Belarus in 2024. Jaishankar concluded by calling for unity and collective action to shape global affairs. *—PTI*

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> I guess the Chinese foreign minister will come and apprise Modi about recent developments in China-India ties. The EAM is now running a full-blown circus aimed at destroying India's foreign policy
>
> —Rahul Gandhi, Cong leader

CM pushes for social justice in AICC OBC meet

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday addressed the AICC OBC Advisory Council at the Bharat Jodo Auditorium and declared a bold national push for social justice rooted in data, dignity, and democracy.

Highlighting Karnataka's legacy, from Basavanna's egalitarian ideals to the pioneering 1921 reservation policy, he stressed that the OBC struggle is not about reservation alone, but for dignity, representation, and power. He condemned BJP's neglect of caste census data, dilution of reservations, and systemic marginalisation of OBCs, SCs, STs, and minorities.

Congress leader Ashok Gehlot with DyCM DK Shivakumar and CM CM Siddaramaiah during OBC meet in Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Tracing milestones from the Miller Committee to the Mandal Commission and Rajiv Gandhi's 73rd-74th Amendments, Siddaramaiah hailed Congress's legislative and policy contributions, including the Backward Classes Act and SECC 2011. Karnataka's own surveys and reforms, he said, serve as a model for national adoption.

He underscored the need for a new caste census, proportionate political representation, private sector reservations, education access, and grassroots empowerment. Citing the judiciary's role, he criticised BJP's misuse of the "Triple Test" to stall OBC reservation. *—Salar News*

Parties using caste is dangerous: SC

NEW DELHI, JULY 15

The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that political parties relying on caste considerations are equally dangerous for the country, as it dismissed a plea seeking cancellation of the registration of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM).

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi noted that the AIMIM's constitution aligns with the Indian Constitution, stating its objective is to work for every backward section of society, including minorities. "There are certain rights guaranteed to

minorities under the Constitution, and the party says it will work to protect them," the bench said.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Tirupati Narasimha Murari, represented by advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, challenging AIMIM's registration by the Election Commission. The bench asked Jain to withdraw the plea and instead file a broader petition seeking electoral reforms without targeting a specific party.

"You may be right that some political parties indulge in religious or caste-based campaigning. That's a grey area.," the bench said. Jain argued AIMIM promotes Islamic education and awareness about Sharia law. Justice Kant responded, "Teaching Islamic education is not wrong. The court said promoting constitutional values, including religious education protected by law, is not objectionable, but promoting untouchability or unconstitutional practices is. *—PTI*

Fauja, 'world's oldest runner', dies in accident

CHANDIGARH, 14 JULY

Fauja Singh, the legendary 114-year-old marathon runner, died on Monday after being struck by an unidentified vehicle in Bias village, Jalandhar district, Punjab.

Singh was out for a walk when he was hit. He sustained head injuries and succumbed in the evening, police said. The driver fled the scene, and a case of rash and negligent driving has been registered, confirmed SHO Hardevpreet Singh of Adampur Police Station.

His death was confirmed by author and former Punjab State Information Commissioner Khushwant Singh, who had penned Singh's biography 'The Turbaned Tornado'.

Born in 1911 into a family of farmers, Singh moved to England in the 1990s but later returned to Punjab. He began running marathons in 1999 to raise funds for premature babies and became the first centenarian to complete a marathon. *—PTI*

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INDIA ERUPTS IN CHEERS

Shux back to Earth with a splash after 18 days

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Waving and smiling, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla of the Indian Air Force returned to Earth on Tuesday after an 18-day mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS), marking a major milestone for India's space ambitions.

Shukla, born in Lucknow, became the second Indian in space after Rakesh Sharma's 1984 flight and the first Indian to visit the ISS. His 20-day orbital mission, as part of the private Axiom-4 crew, signals renewed human spaceflight efforts for India, Hungary, and Poland—nations returning to space after more than 40 years.

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla waves as he reaches Earth aboard the Dragon spacecraft that splashed down off California **PHOTO: PTI**

The Axiom-4 mission launched aboard SpaceX's Dragon Grace spacecraft from Florida on 25 June and docked with the ISS a day later. The crew, including mission commander Peggy Whitson (USA), and specialists Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski (Poland) and Tibor Kapu (Hungary), conducted 60 scientific experiments and 20 outreach sessions.

Travelling at over 28,000 km/h, Dragon Grace re-entered Earth's atmosphere and splashed down in the Pacific Ocean off San Diego at 2.31am PT (3.01pm IST). The crew was recovered by SpaceX's ship Shannon, emerging from the capsule to cheers and applause. Shukla's family watched the event from Lucknow. "He's been to space and back—we are over the moon," said his father, Shambhu Dayal Shukla, linking the achievement to India's Gaganyaan mission, scheduled for 2027. *—PTI*

AI crash report doesn't provide answers: Pilots

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) has said the preliminary report into the Air India plane crash by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) "raises questions but offers no answers," and cautioned against speculation.

The 15-page report, released Saturday, concerns the fatal crash of Air India flight AI 171, a Boeing 787-8 en-route from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick, which crashed shortly after takeoff on 12 June, killing 260 people. According to cockpit voice recordings cited in the report, the fuel switches to both engines were cut off within one second of each other, causing cockpit confusion. One pilot questioned the action; the other denied responsibility. The report does not offer conclusions or safety recommendations. Nevertheless, speculation has arisen, suggesting possible pilot error, a notion rejected by pilot groups.

"Any extrapolation of the report's content is guesswork and unhelpful to the investigation," IFALPA said on 14 July, calling for all parties to avoid premature conclusions. *—PTI*

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Trend of chicken thefts emerges in Chikkaballapur

CHINTAMANI, 15 JULY

A concerning trend of poultry thefts has emerged in Chintamani, Chikkaballapur, with local breed birds (nati koli) being targeted by thieves looking to profit. Recently, villagers from three localities lodged complaints at the Chintamani rural police station. Reports indicate that residents from Kaiwara Cross, Katriguppe, Ullappanahalli, Kundalagurki, and Chintudupi have all experienced similar thefts. Villagers observed CCTV footage which revealed thieves scaling compound walls to steal birds from enclosed farms. Muniyappa, a resident of Kaiwara Cross, noted that the local poultry is prized not only for its taste but also for its perceived medicinal properties. As a result, these birds fetch a higher market price. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Rival gang murders contract killer in Vijayapura

VIJAYAPURA, 15 JULY

Contract killer Sushil Kale, an aide of notorious criminal Bagappa Harijan, was murdered by a six-member gang on the outskirts of Vijayapura town on Monday night, police said. Two of the accused, identified as Akash Kalawagol and Subhash Bagali, tried to escape on a bike, but police foiled their attempt by shooting them in their legs. Kale had come to an area under Gandhi Chowk police station limits late in the night on Monday when the gang attacked him. He was first shot with a country-made revolver and later attacked with sharp weapons, killing him on the spot. "I fired two rounds of bullets to their legs after they refused to surrender," Gandhi Chowk Police Inspector Pradeep Talakeri said. ***—Salar News***

Three Udupi fishermen go missing at sea

UDUPI, 15 JULY

Three among four fishermen in Baindur taluk of Udupi district are missing after their fishing boat overturned in rough weather at the Arabian Sea on Tuesday morning. The missing trio has been identified as 40-year-old Suresh Kharvi, 38-year-old Rohit Kharvi and 43-year-old Jaganath Kharvi. Their companion Santosh Karvi escaped by swimming to another fishing boat that was in the vicinity. The fishing boat was overturned near the Madi Light House near Gangolli around 8am. The missing trio also could swim, but they could not reach the other boar because of rough sea, heavy rain and strong winds. The Coast Guard is continuing their search for the missing. However, there was no trace of them till 4pm, sources said. ***—Salar News***

BTM Cong offers free e-Khata enrollment drive

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

The BTM Assembly MLA Office has launched a free e-Khata enrollment drive for residents of BTM Layout. The drive will take place from 14 July to 26 July, with registration services available between 9.30am and 4.30pm. The enrollment is being conducted at the BTM MLA Office, in Koramangala 5th Block, behind Sukh Sagar Hotel, at no cost. Applicants are required to provide copies of their sale deed, previous Khata, electricity bill, latest property tax receipt, Aadhaar card, a passport-size photograph, and a photograph of the building with GPS location. Residents can contact S Anand, BTM Layout Block Congress President, at 99458 93916. ***—Salar News***

No link in Covid-vaccines and deaths, State confirms

'Post-Covid lifestyles may have contributed to sudden deaths'

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

State Minister for Medical Education Sharanprakash Patil on Tuesday said there has been no rise in cardiac deaths or hospital admissions in the State, vis-a-vis Covid-19 vaccination and that the findings align with those of AIIMS, New Delhi. There was no need for panic, he said.

"So, people need not panic. There is no correlation between the Covid vaccine and these deaths," Patil said.

Patil along with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, was addressing a press conference at Vikas Soudha to highlight the findings of reports by the Bengaluru-based National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences & Research (JICSR), Bengaluru.

The reports investigated the rising trend of sudden cardiovascular events—heart attacks and sudden cardiac deaths, notably in Hassan.

While NIMHANS reviewed the records of all confirmed SARS CoV2 patients admitted from March to September 2020 with neurological symptoms—about 3,200 in total—JICSR studied 251 patients admitted between April 1 and May 31.

According to the NIMHANS study, among the 3,200 patients treated for neurological illness during the study period, only 120 patients—about 3.7 per cent—had confirmed Covid 19 infection with neurological disorders.

The JICSR study established that only 19 patients—about 7.6 per cent—recalled a prior infection, while virtually all (249/251) had received at least one vaccine dose.

Dr KS Ravindranath, Director of JICSR, who was also present at the press conference, said the observational study conducted at JICSR did not find any association between premature cardiovascular disease and a prior history of Covid-19 infection or Covid vaccination.

"Covid vaccination has been shown to be protective against cardiac events in the long term," noted Ravindranath.

Patil added, "(Among the 24), only 10 were due to heart attacks; the remaining deaths were due to other causes."

Patil said post-Covid lifestyle changes have led to a rise in diabetes and blood pressure cases.

"Dietary habits have changed, and stress levels have increased," he added.

Gundu Rao insisted that there is no need for screening children for heart diseases. "We will organise awareness programmes through Jayadeva Hospital (JICSR)," he added. *—PTI*

Minister for Medical Education Sharanprakash Patil said that there was no need for panic **PHOTO: PTI**

> **Only those showing symptoms of heart-related illness should go for a medical check-up. Don't rush to hospitals without a reason,**
>
> -Sharanprakash Patil, Minister for Medical Education

MORE POPCORN?

State proposes Rs 200 cap for movie tickets

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

- The cost of the ticket of each show in all theatres of the State including multiplexes for all language films shall not exceed Rs 200 inclusive of entertainment tax, the notification said

The State government has proposed to put a ceiling of Rs 200 on cinema hall tickets including multiplexes for all language films.

A draft notification was issued on Tuesday.

"Provided that the cost of the ticket of each show in all theatre of the State including multiplexes for all language films shall not exceed Rs 200 inclusive of entertainment tax," it said.

Any objection and suggestion which may be received by the State government from any person with respect to the said draft within 15 days will be taken into consideration, the notification said.

Objections and suggestions should be addressed to the Additional Chief Secretary to Government. *—PTI*

The High Court noted that the Supreme Court allows sealed cover confidentiality solely for issues related to national security **PHOTO: PTI**

State HC orders disclosure of RCB stampede report

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

The Karnataka High Court has instructed the state government to provide a copy of the status report concerning the stampede that occurred on 4 June at Chinnaswamy Stadium. The report, which was submitted in a sealed cover, is to be shared with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), and DNA Entertainment Networks.

The court rejected the government's rationale for keeping the report confidential, affirming that the Supreme Court allows sealed cover confidentiality solely for issues related to national security, public interest, or privacy rights—none of which pertain to this case.

A division bench, consisting of Acting Chief Justice V Kameswar Rao and Justice CM Joshi, made these remarks while adjudicating whether the involved parties in the suo motu public interest litigation surrounding the stampede should access the document.

The tragic incident took place outside Chinnaswamy Stadium when RCB celebrated its first Indian Premier League title. The state government's concern that sharing the report could affect ongoing inquiries was dismissed by the bench, which highlighted that seasoned judges and senior officers leading these investigations are unlikely to be influenced by the report.

The court reiterated the necessity of transparency to better understand the events leading up to the stampede, evaluate accountability, and propose measures to prevent similar incidents in the future. *—PTI*

SWC: Need SIT probe in D'sthala burials case

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

Karnataka State Women's Commission Chairperson Nagalakshmi Choudhary has urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe cases of disappearances, unnatural deaths and sexual assaults in Dharmasthala over the past two decades.

Dharmasthala in Dakshina Kannada district is a major pilgrimage centre.

Citing recent media reports and a statement made in court by a sanitation worker who claimed to have buried "hundreds of bodies" in the area, Choudhary described the situation as "deeply alarming, which requires immediate and impartial investigation".

In a letter to the Chief Minister on Monday, Choudhary said, "The Commission has taken serious note of the reports aired by some media outlets on July 12, 2025, which included claims about the recovery of a human skull. Concerns were raised by the family of a missing medical student. These revelations point towards possible systematic abuse, murder, rape, and unexplained deaths involving women and students."

Choudhary said numerous families had approached the police in the past regarding missing persons, but many were met with indifference or inadequate response from the authorities.

"There are allegations that police failed to act appropriately when families attempted to register complaints about missing women or unnatural deaths," she said. *—PTI*

A sanitation worker had come forward claiming to have buried hundreds of bodies, some of whom were rape victims **PHOTO: ANI**

Surjewala continues to review State ministers' performances

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

Congress General Secretary and State in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala held individual meetings with various State ministers to address grievances and evaluate their performance amidst complaints from party MLAs.

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi reported that he provided Surjewala with a detailed account of developmental projects undertaken in his department. He noted that while funds had been allocated for public works across several constituencies, a few requests from MLAs remain unaddressed. Jarkiholi pledged to convene a meeting to resolve these pending issues.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao downplayed the meeting's impact, stating that Surjewala merely shared feedback on ongoing concerns without any significant developments arising during their discussions.

Minor Irrigation, Science and Technology Minister NS Boseraju said that Surjewala addressed the demands of MLAs. He dismissed claims of internal dissent, claiming that any issues had been resolved amicably.

Despite Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's assurances of completing his term, undercurrents of discontent persist within the party. *—PTI*

City cops foil kidnapping plot, arrest four

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

In a significant operation, the City police thwarted a kidnapping plot aimed at extorting Rs 1 crore from a local businessman by threatening to abduct his son. The police reports indicate that the mastermind, a local businessman embroiled in a financial dispute with the victim, conspired with three associates from Delhi to execute the plan. The accused intended to make a ransom threat masquerading as notorious gang members from North India.

The victim reported the threat call on 9 July, prompting police to conduct an investigation. Authorities formed specialised teams from the Central Division and Central Crime Branch. A local businessman on JC Road was apprehended on 12 July after confessing his involvement and revealing the conspiracy.

With assistance from Delhi police, the three accomplices were captured in national capital. City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said the case was resolved in 48 hours. *—PTI*

Vanya Steels to set up Rs 100cr power plant in the State

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

- The facility, which aims to generate green electricity, will rank among State's leading industrial-scale waste heat utilisation projects in the steel sector

Vanya Steels Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of A-One Steel Group, on Tuesday announced that it is investing approximately Rs 100 crore to set up a cutting-edge 10 MW captive power plant at its Koppal facility.

Using advanced Waste Heat Recovery Boiler (WHRB) technology, the project will convert industrial waste heat into clean electricity, marking a significant milestone in sustainable manufacturing for the region, Vanya said.

"The plant will repurpose residual heat from the steel-making process—energy traditionally lost to the environment—into a reliable source of green power," A-One Steel Group said. "This will reduce dependence on grid electricity, lower operational costs, and cut carbon emissions". The plant is expected to be commissioned by the end of this month.

The project aims to generate employment for 60 people at the Koppal location, the company added.

The facility will rank among State's leading industrial-scale waste heat utilisation projects in the steel sector. *– PTI*

'ISLAMAPHOBIC'

J&K students body writes to CM over hijab ban

SRINAGAR, 15 JULY

The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) on Tuesday wrote to State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, seeking his immediate intervention in an incident of alleged religious discrimination faced by Kashmiri female students wearing a hijab at a nursing college in Bengaluru.

Students, who wear the hijab or burkha, have reportedly been barred from attending classes and threatened with expulsion by the management of Sri Soubhagya Lalitha College of Nursing, affiliated with the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS).

In its letter, the Association expressed deep anguish over the harassment and humiliation allegedly inflicted upon the students, who were denied entry into classrooms and practical sessions.

"These Kashmiri female students have been systematically targeted, humiliated, and denied their fundamental right to education solely because they choose to wear the burkha or abaya, an expression of modesty, dignity, and identity rooted deeply in their religious and personal beliefs," the letter stated.

Students, who wear the hijab or burkha, have reportedly been barred from attending classes at Sri Soubhagya Lalitha College of Nursing **PHOTO: PTI**

National Convenor of the Association, Nasir Khuehami, said that the college Chairman stormed into a classroom and ordered hijab-wearing students to leave immediately. When the students asked for clarification based on this directive, they were reportedly told, "This is our college; only our rules apply."

The chairman and principal allegedly threatened to terminate the students and withhold their academic records if they continued to wear their religious attire.

Calling it "absurd, Islamophobic stereotypes," Khuehami noted that this was a "direct and dangerous violation of the fundamental rights."

The Association demanded that the Chief Minister take decisive action. *—ANI*

CM pays tribute to actress Saroja Devi in Mandya

BENGALURU, 15 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah paid homage to legendary actress B Saroja Devi, who passed away due to age-related illness at her Bengaluru residence at the age of 87. The Chief Minister described her death as a significant loss to the Indian film industry. Her last rites were scheduled to take place in her native village Dhashavara in Mandya district.

Siddaramaiah praised Saroja Devi for her remarkable 70-year career, highlighting her versatility as an actress in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi films. The Chief Minister noted that her embodiment of various characters alongside notable actors like MG Ramachandran and NT Rama Rao left an indelible mark on cinema.

Expressing condolences on behalf of the State government, Siddaramaiah announced that state honours would be awarded at her cremation. The Chief Minister recalled warm personal memories with Saroja Devi and acknowledged her contributions to the growth of the Kannada film industry, underscoring her historical and mythological roles. A multitude of tributes poured in from political leaders and industry figures, recognising her lasting legacy and impact on Indian cinema. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Ousted MDMK leader denounces 'traitor' claim

CHENNAI, 15 JULY

Sidelined MDMK leader Mallai CE Sathya, once a close aide of party chief Vaiko, broke his silence, saying he would have preferred poison over being labelled a "traitor". In a strongly worded statement, Sathya said Vaiko's accusation had deeply wounded him and tarnished his decades-long political commitment. On 10 July, Vaiko alleged that Sathya had been aiding dissidents abroad. Tensions had simmered since April, when Sathya opposed the elevation of Vaiko's son, Durai Vaiko. Matters worsened after Sathya's absence from party banners. In a tearful interview, Sathya said he hadn't slept in days but would prove his integrity.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

NCP tells Kerala MLAs to resign immediately

T'PURAM, 15 JULY

NCP national working president Praful Patel has directed two Kerala MLAs — Forest Minister AK Saseendran and state party president Thomas K Thomas — to resign for allegedly engaging in anti-party activities. Both are aligned with Sharad Pawar's NCP(SP) faction, despite being elected in 2021 on the NCP's official "clock" symbol. Patel suspended Thomas for six years and warned both of disqualification under the People's Representation Act and Anti-Defection Law if they fail to resign within a week. Both MLAs dismissed Patel's authority, insisting they are part of the Pawar-led group. The ruling LDF is already grappling with unrest involving JD(S).—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rahul Gandhi granted bail in defamation case

LUCKNOW, 15 JULY

A Lucknow court on Tuesday granted bail to Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in a defamation case linked to his comments about Indian soldiers during the 2022 Bharat Jodo Yatra. The complaint, filed by retired BRO director Uday Shankar Srivastava, alleged Gandhi's remarks about Indian troops being "beaten by Chinese soldiers" were defamatory and hurt his sentiments. Gandhi appeared in court, furnished a bail bond with sureties, and was granted bail.—*PTI*

FIR against ex-MLA, 1K others over attacking cops

HIMMATNAGAR, 15 JULY

A case has been registered against at least 1,000 people, including a former MLA, for allegedly attacking police and damaging public property during a protest by dairy farmers outside Sabar Dairy in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district, an official said on Tuesday. Police have arrested 47 people so far in connection with Monday's violent protest, & a search is underway to nab others, including ex-Congress MLA Jashubhai Patel, Deputy Superintendent of Police AK Patel said. "The protestors indulged in violence, hurled stones at police & damaged the main gate of the dairy. Three policemen were injured," he said.—*PTI*

Xi asks SCO to boost security mechanisms

Jaishankar tells SCO that it must must have an 'uncompromising position' on terrorism

BEIJING, 15 JULY

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday told the foreign ministers of the SCO member states that the grouping should improve mechanisms to respond to security threats and challenges, and build a solid security barrier.

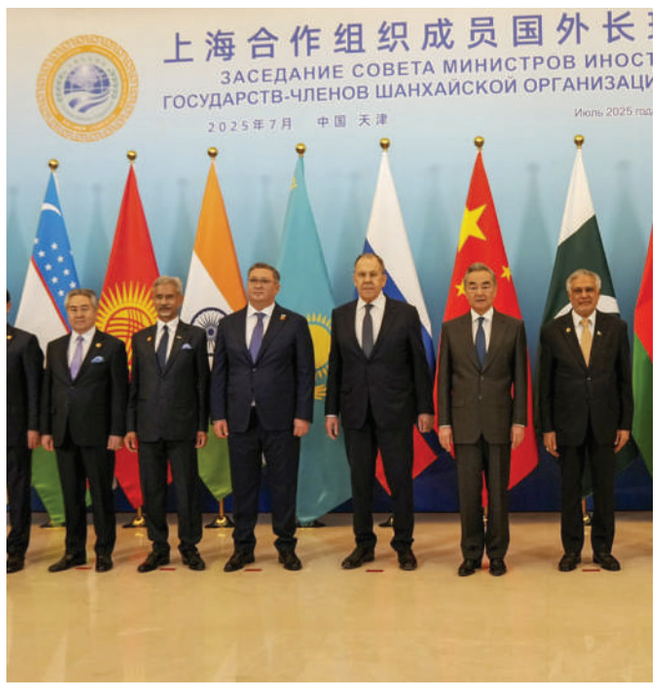
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was among the foreign ministers and heads of standing bodies of the 10-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) whom Xi met here ahead of their meeting in Tianjin.

"SCO must have an uncompromising position' on terrorism," Jaishankar told the Foreign Ministers at the meet.

Meanwhile, Xi said that over the past 24 years since its founding, the SCO has always upheld the Shanghai Spirit, grown into a mature and robust organisation, and demonstrated strong vitality.

He stressed that in the face of a turbulent and changing international landscape, the SCO must stay focused and confident, act efficiently and play a more proactive role in injecting greater stability and positive energy into the world.

Xi said China has always prioritised the SCO in its neighbourhood diplomacy, and is committed to making the organisation more substantive and stronger, safeguarding regional security and stability, promoting the development and prosperity of member states and building a closer community with a shared future.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar poses for group photograph with Foreign Ministers during the SCO Meeting, in Tianjin, China **PHOTO: PTI**

The SCO, over the years, has developed a security mechanism called the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) to deal with issues relating to security and defence.

China currently holds the rotating Presidency of the SCO.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova was earlier quoted as saying that the summit is set to be held in Tianjin between 30 August and 1 September. —*PTI*

22 times in 65 days: Cong on Trump's claim

With US President Donald Trump reiterating his claim that he stopped the conflict between India and Pakistan, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday said the same claim keeps getting repeated "22 times in 65 days". Tagging a video of Trump's remarks, Ramesh said, "65 days. 22 times. The same claim. It keeps getting repeated." —*PTI*

Pak FM condemns terrorism at SCO meeting, seeks dialogue

TIANJIN, 15 JULY

- He also denounced recent attacks by Israel and the US on Iran and urged for an immediate halt to violence in Gaza.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar emphasised the importance of dialogue and diplomacy for resolving disputes with neighbouring countries, including India, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) foreign ministers meeting on 15 July.

He expressed concern over escalating tensions in South Asia, particularly following the Pahalgam attack attributed to Pakistan, which nearly led to a major conflict between the nuclear-armed nations.

Dar condemned India's Operation Sindoor, initiated in retaliation to the attack and underscored Pakistan's commitment to maintaining a ceasefire and regional stability. He stressed that ongoing conflicts must be addressed through comprehensive dialogue and adherence to bilateral agreements.

Moreover, Dar condemned terrorism in all its forms, including state-sponsored acts, and called for a cooperative international approach to tackle its root causes. He also denounced recent attacks by Israel and the US on Iran and urged for an immediate halt to violence in Gaza. —*PTI*

SIA checks Boeing 787 fuel switches

SINGAPORE, 15 JULY

Singapore Airlines on Tuesday said all fuel switches on its Boeing 787 aircraft - as well as those belonging to its subsidiary Scoot - are functioning properly in compliance with regulatory requirements.

"As a precautionary measure, SIA and Scoot have carried out and completed checks on the fuel switches of the Boeing 787 aircraft in our fleet," the Channel News Asia quoted SIA as saying.

SIA has 26 B787 planes in its fleet, while its low-cost, wholly owned subsidiary Scoot has 23.

"The safety of our customers and staff is our top priority," said SIA, which is a 25.1 per cent partner of Air India and operator of daily SIA-Scoot flights to India.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is also working with SIA and Scoot to conduct inspections of the fuel control switches of all active Singapore-registered Boeing 737, 787 and 747-400F aircraft.

"There have been no findings from the inspections to date," CAAS said.

India, South Korea, and Japan had reported similar moves after a preliminary report on last month's Air India crash showed that the controls of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner were moved from the "run" to "cutoff" position, starving the engines of fuel, according to media reports.

"There's no way that you can accidentally knock it and then it goes in the opposite direction," the Channel had a former airline executive in aircraft maintenance, as saying. —*PTI*

Bihar Cabinet promises to create 1cr jobs

PATNA, 15 JULY

The Bihar Cabinet on Tuesday cleared a proposal to create 'one crore jobs and employment opportunities' in the next five years.

The Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, approved the proposal of the Labour department in this regard and also decided to constitute a 12-member committee headed by Development Commissioner to explore the possibilities and take decisions in this regard.

The CM on Sunday had announced that "For the next five years, we are setting a target to double the 2020-25 goal by providing government jobs and employment opportunities to one crore youths. To achieve this, new jobs and employment opportunities will also be created in the private sector, particularly in industrial areas. For this purpose, a high-level committee is being constituted, he said.

Nitish Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

Soon after the Cabinet meeting, Additional Chief Secretary S Siddhartha told reporters, that along with the proposal, the government has also decided to constitute a 12-member committee, headed by Chief Secretary.

The cabinet also approved 30 proposals from different departments on Tuesday. The decision assumes significance ahead of the assembly polls due later this year. The cabinet also approved more than Rs 179 crore for the maintenance of the priority corridor of metro rail which will become operational from 15 August, 2025, in Patna. —*PTI*

> **To ensure voter confidence and administrative preparedness, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process should be conducted with sufficient lead time, ideally not within six months of any major election.**
>
> -Telugu Desam Party Delegation

Why no PM? Cong flags new attendance system

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

With the Lok Sabha reportedly set to introduce a new multi-media device-based attendance system for members from the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament, Congress' whip in the Lower House Manickam Tagore on Tuesday claimed the system is "flawed" and asked why are the Prime Minister and Ministers exempted.

The Lok Sabha is set to introduce a new attendance system for its members from the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament that will require them to punch in their presence through a multi-media device at the seat allotted to them instead of doing so in the lobby.

"Shouldn't the PM lead by example instead of being above the process? It would reveal how many days the PM is actually present in the Lok Sabha -typically just 3 to 4 days out of 18 to 28," Tagore said. Meanwhile, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge met Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. —*PTI*

1 religion altering demography: Sarma

GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed on Tuesday that the indigenous communities of the state are facing "invasion" from people of "one religion", who are allegedly encroaching on land in different parts to alter the area's demography.

He said government's eviction drives, through which over 1.19 lakh bighas have been cleared since 2021, are a major step towards checking this alleged attempt by migrants to gain political hold in Assamese-majority areas.

Additionally, he said it has been found during eviction drives that the encroachers are mostly people with land in their native districts, and yet they move to settle illegally in distant parts of state.

He said that as these people migrate from one part of the state and settle in another part, they enroll themselves as voters in the new place.

And once they grow in numbers to thousands, they become a sizable vote bank, and the political leaders do not act against their initial encroachment of forest or government land, he claimed.

Furthermore, he alleged that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) was trying to "shield Muslim infiltrators from Bangladesh", and accused the opposition party of distorting his remarks on the Bengali-speaking population in the north eastern state. —*PTI*

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma **PHOTO: PTI**

OLD ENMITY SUSPECTED

CPI leader shot dead in Hyd during morning walk

HYDERABAD, 15 JULY

A Telangana CPI leader was killed on the spot on Tuesday after unidentified assailants opened fire on him during his morning walk at Malakpet here, police said.

A previous enmity stemming from a land dispute seems to be the reason behind the killing of K Chandu Naik, police said.

The assailants came in a car, opened fire on Naik, a state council member of CPI, while he was on a morning walk near a park at around 7.30 am. After they shot multiple rounds, he died on the spot, a senior police official told PTI.

The accused then fled the scene.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East Zone) S Chaitanya Kumar told reporters that at least three to four persons were involved in the firing targeting Naik.

Police recovered three fired rounds and two unfired rounds from the spot.

Based on the recovery of these, it seems only one weapon was used in the firing. However, further investigation is on, the official added.

The official further said an old rivalry is suspected to be the reason behind the attack. —*PTI*

Modi Govt kept inflation 5.1% lower than UPA: BJP

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

India's retail inflation fell to a six-year low of 2.1 per cent in June 2025, according to the National Statistics Office (NSO). The decline was largely due to lower food prices, particularly vegetables, supported by a favourable monsoon.

BJP hailed the development as proof of the Modi government's effective handling of inflation. BJP IT cell chief Amit Malviya stated that average inflation under Modi has been 5.1 per cent, compared to 8.1 per cent under the Congress-led UPA. Malviya noted that between January 2012 and April 2014, retail inflation exceeded 9 per cent in 22 out of 28 months, even breaching double digits at times. —*PTI*

DISCIPLE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Don't compel me: Shinde warns Sena leaders over Marathi row

MUMBAI, 14 JULY

In response to recent controversies involving a Shiv Sena MLA and a minister, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde urged party legislators and ministers to maintain discipline in public life.

His comments followed an incident where MLA Sanjay Gaikwad was filmed punching and slapping a canteen staff member for allegedly serving stale food.

The ensuing backlash prompted Shinde to take a firm stance on accountability within the party.

"I expect discipline and accountability from each of you," Shinde stated during a party meeting, emphasising the need for proper conduct. The MLA's actions were met with widespread condemnation, including from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Compounding the situation was another incident involving Minister Sanjay Shirsat, whose viral video, purportedly showcasing a bag full of cash, raised eyebrows amid his reported income tax notice relating to increased assets.

Shinde expressed his reluctance to take action against party members but warned, "Don't compel me to do so."

He highlighted that the behaviour of party members reflects on him and urged them to focus on their roles as party workers rather than indulge in unnecessary issues.

"Success should not get to your heads. Remain alert; the coming time will test us," he cautioned. —*PTI*

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde **PHOTO: PTI**

- He highlighted that the behaviour of party members reflects on him and urged them to focus on their roles as party workers rather than indulge in unnecessary issues.

SHASHIKANT SHINDE NEW PRESIDENT OF MAHARASHTRA NCP (SP)

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

Former Maharashtra minister and MLC Shashikant Shinde was on Tuesday named new president of the state NCP (SP) unit, replacing Jayant Patil.

Shinde's appointment was announced by NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar at the party's general body meeting here, NCP (SP) spokesperson Clyde Crasto told PTI.

His name was proposed by former minister Anil Deshmukh and seconded by Shirur MP Amol Kolhe and former MLA Sunil Bhusara.

Later, Sharad Pawar took the mic and said he had received one name for post, Crasto said and asked the leaders present if anybody among them wanted to contest.

After receiving no response, Shinde's name was announced as the unanimous choice, Crasto added. —*PTI*

Shashikant Shinde **PHOTO: PTI**

Odisha villagers demand justice as they cremate student's body

She set herself ablaze after her pleas against sexual harassment were ignored

BHUBANESWAR/ BALASORE, 15 JULY

The body of the college student who set herself ablaze following alleged sexual harassment by a professor was consigned to flames at a crematorium in her village in Odisha's Balasore on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old woman's cousin brother lit the funeral pyre at the village crematorium in the presence of thousands of people.

The locals bid a tearful adieu to the brave woman who lost fighting for justice and not giving up the alleged demand of the teacher of the college.

"My daughter has taught me to fight and I will continue it. I do not need the money or ex-gratia. I want my daughter back. Can the government give me back my child," the woman's father said with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan announced ex gratia of Rs 20 lakh for the family.

The student died at the AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Monday night after battling for life for about 60 hours., officials said.

A villager said the deceased student was active during natural calamities, particularly floods. "She used to help the administration to shift women to safe places during floods," said the villager.

"She was mentally strong and brilliant student. She was my student. She was forced to die by suicide by setting herself on fire for being denied justice," said a teacher.

The deceased student's grandfather said that the government "failed" to give her justice for which she ended her life. She had approached all from MLA to Union minister, said another villager.

The 20-year-old second-year B.Ed student of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College, Balasore had accused the Head of Education Department, Samira Kumar Sahu of sexually harassing her. She set herself on fire on Saturday on the college campus over alleged inaction against the professor.

Police have set up a swift trial initiative team to expedite the probe into the death

The police arrested Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College principal Dillip Kumar Ghose on Monday for abetment of suicide of the student. The head of the Education department of the college Samira Kumar Sahu was arrested on Saturday —*PTI*

Family members of the student mourn during her last rites at her village in Balasore district of Odisha on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

> **It is even more disturbing to think how a failed system can take someone's life. The most painful part is that this was not an accident, but rather the result of a system that remained silent instead of helping**
>
> –Naveen Patnaik, Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly

WAS IT SUICIDE OR INSTITUTIONAL MURDER?

The death of a 20-year-old college student in Odisha has sent shockwaves across the country. The 2nd year BEd student at a Balasore college, was sexually harassed allegedly by her HoD.

Here's a look at the timeline of events that led to her death:

1 JULY

- The survivor files a complaint at the college against HoD Samir Kumar Sahu.
- She also writes to higher education minister, chief minister's office, a Union minister and personally met Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi.

12TH JULY

- Ignored by the principal and administration despite a complaint, she launches a protest.
- During the protest, she goes to the principal's office and sets herself on fire and is rushed to the district hospital.

13 JULY

- The survivor with 95% burns is shifted to AIIMS, Bhubaneswar.
- HoD Sahu is suspended and arrested; Principal Dilip Ghose is also suspended.
- Education Dept forms a probe committee.

14 JULY

- Odisha Guv Hari Babu Kambhampati asks for a report.
- The suspended principal is arrested.
- The student succumbs to her injuries.

15 JULY

- With many dubbing her death a case of "institutional murder", the National Human Rights Commission and National Commission for Women take cognisance of the matter.

Delhi college, school get bomb threats

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

St Stephen's College and St Thomas School in Delhi received bomb threats through email on Tuesday, prompting a rush of emergency services at both premises and a thorough search operation by authorities, police said. DCP (North) Raja Banthia said about the threat, "The mail said that four IED bombs and two RDX have been planted in the premises and library of the college. It further said that it will explode by 2 pm." Though the entire premises were cordoned off, nothing suspicious was found during the check. Hitting out at BJP over the threats, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal took to X to ask, "What's happening in Delhi? Yesterday, two schools received bomb threats, and today, another school and a college received threats". —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

New species of day gecko discovered in Assam

GUWAHATI, 15 JULY

A new species of day gecko has been discovered on the banks of the Brahmaputra river in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday. It is the second species of such kind recorded in the Northeast, he said. "New addition to Assam's rich biodiversity! A new species of day gecko has been discovered on the banks of Brahmaputra & named Cnemaspis Brahmaputra," Sarma said in a post on X. "This is only the 2nd species of such kind found in Northeast," he added, while congratulating the researchers behind this discovery. —*PTI*

5 killed, 17 injured as tempo falls into gorge in J&K

JAMMU, 15 JULY

Five persons, including a woman, were killed while 17 others were injured when an overloaded passenger vehicle skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in hilly Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, officials said. The accident took place on Doda-Bharth road near Ponda, some 30 kms from Doda town, when the driver of a tempo reportedly lost control while negotiating a blind curve around 9 am. The injured 17, including those in critical condition, are currently undergoing treatment. J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, CM Omar Abdullah and Democratic Progressive Azad Party president Ghulam Nabi Azad have condoled the loss of lives in the tragic accident. —*PTI*

Following a six-hours face-off with the mob, the security forces left the village without making any arrests **PHOTO: PTI**

Manipur tense after bid to arrest militant

IMPHAL, 15 JULY

- As the evening progressed, the mob grew in numbers, and the protest intensified with tyres being set on fire to block the road

Tensions gripped a village in Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district of Manipur after security forces attempted to arrest a militant, officials said on Tuesday.

The forces tried to arrest the militant from Molhoi village on Monday evening, they said.

On getting to know about it, a large mob gathered at the spot and stopped the forces from making the arrest, they added.

As the evening progressed, the mob grew in numbers, and the protest intensified with tyres being set on fire to block the road. Following the face-off, which lasted for around six hours, the security forces left the village around 1 am without making any arrests, officials said.

Eighty-six weapons and 974 ammunition were recovered by security forces in a simultaneous operation in the five valley districts of Manipur

Acting on specific intelligence, security forces carried out the operation in Imphal East, Kakching, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Bishnupur districts, IGP (Zone-II) K Kabib said, addressing a press conference. —*PTI*

SC bins terror convict's release plea

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to order the premature release of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, a convict in a triple murder case allegedly linked to a terrorist act.

A bench comprising Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and SVN Bhatti, however, allowed Bhat to challenge the remission policy of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir by filing an application in another pending case.

The bench heard Bhat's plea for early release on the ground that he had served 27 years in prison.

While senior advocate Colin Gonsalves appeared for Bhat, additional solicitor general KM Nataraj represented the union territory.

Bhat allegedly entered the residence of an Army informer and opened fire with an AK-47 rifle, killing three persons.

Explosive devices, including a Under Barrerl Grenade Launcher grenade, were also reportedly recovered from the scene, the prosecution alleged.

Nataraj submitted killing civilians for allegedly providing information to the Army amounted to a terrorist act and therefore Bhat was disentitled from availing benefits of premature release.

"The act was intended to create fear and deter cooperation with lawful authorities. This goes beyond a simple murder," he said.

Agreeing with the contention, the bench said "If the act was committed to create fear, to ensure that no one dares to side with the law, then it certainly carries the characteristics of a terrorist act." —*PTI*

SC notice to UP on QR code in Kanwar Yatra

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought response from the Uttar Pradesh government on a plea challenging the state's directive mandating the display of QR codes on all eateries along the 'kanwar' yatra route, which reveal the names and identities of the owners. —*PTI*

SC to hear plea on ED powers on 31 July

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed 31 July for hearing a batch of pleas seeking the review of a 2022 verdict that upheld the Enforcement Directorate (ED) powers of arrest and attachment of property involved in money laundering, search and seizure under PMLA. —*PTI*

Raina appears in SC for 'ridiculing' disabled

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Five social media influencers, including 'India's Got Latent' host Samay Raina, on Tuesday appeared before the Supreme Court in a case against them for ridiculing persons suffering from disabilities. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi asked them to reply to the petition. —*PTI*

SC grants protection to cartoonist in Modi, RSS shaming row

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted protection from coercive action to a cartoonist accused of sharing online objectionable content on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS workers. The top court also expressed anguish over increasing objectionable posts on social media but protected cartoonist Hemant Malviya against coercive state action in view of the FIR in Madhya Pradesh after his counsel Vrinda Grover assured an apology was tendered. —*PTI*

DEADLY PORSCHE DASH

Juvenile trial for 17-year-old driver

PUNE, 15 JULY

The Juvenile Justice Board on Tuesday said the 17-year-old boy accused of driving a Porsche car in an inebriated state and mowing down two people last year in Pune will be tried as a juvenile.

The incident, which hit national headlines, took place in Kalyani Nagar area on 19 May last year, resulting in the deaths of motorcycle-borne IT professionals Anish Awadhiya and his friend Ashwini Costa.

The Pune police had last year sought that the accused be tried as an adult, saying he committed a "heinous" act as not only were two people crushed to death but there were also attempts to tamper with the evidence.

The accused teenager got bail hours after the accident.

The lenient bail terms, including asking the minor to write a 300-word essay on road safety, triggered a nationwide firestorm, following which he was sent to an observation home in Pune city three days later.

On 25 June, 2024, the Bombay High Court directed that the boy be released immediately, saying the Juvenile Justice Board's orders remanding him to an observation home were illegal. —*PTI*

The Porsche car driven by a drunken 17-year-old who killed two bikers in the Kalyani Nagar area of Pune **PHOTO: PTI**

Two teen boys forced to have sex

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

Two teenage male friends, one of them a minor, were allegedly stripped and forced to indulge in unnatural sex by some people over non-payment of money in Mumbai, police said on Tuesday.

The accused people, who are in angadia (courier) business, also filmed the act and threatened the victims that they would circulate it on social media, an official said.

The incident occurred two weeks back and the main accused has been arrested, while search was on for three other persons, he said.

The accused had lent some money to the victims and also accused them of committing a theft, the police said without giving more details.

The two victims were allegedly kidnapped, physically assaulted and confined to a room. They were allegedly stripped and forced to indulge in oral sex, the complaint stated.

One of the accused has been arrested so far and search was on for three others. —*PTI*

ANOTHER BRIDGE COLLAPSES IN GUJ

JUNAGADH, 15 JULY

Some people fell into a shallow rivulet in Junagadh district of Gujarat after a segment of a dilapidated causeway-like bridge collapsed during demolition, officials said on Tuesday.

No injuries were reported in the incident that occurred on Monday evening, less than a week after the Vadodara tragedy, when 20 people were killed after the Munjpur-Gambhira bridge partially collapsed.

Junagadh Collector Anil Ranavasiya said the segment of the bridge connecting Antroli and Keshod collapsed as it was being demolished. He stated that the people who fell into the shallow stream were onlookers who had gathered on the bridge. —PTI

2 SpiceJet flyers try to enter cockpit forcefully

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Two unruly passengers were offloaded from a SpiceJet flight (SG 9282) at the Delhi airport on Monday after they attempted to forcefully enter the cockpit when the aircraft was taxiing.

SpiceJet said the aircraft, which was to fly to Mumbai, returned to the bay and the two passengers were offloaded and later handed over to the CISF.

According to SpiceJet, despite repeated requests by the cabin crew, fellow passengers, and the captain, the two passengers refused to return to their seats.

A video captured by one of the passengers shows the chaos inside the flight as fellow passengers urge the unruly flyerss to sit down. "You cannot stop a plane like this; this is illegal," one passenger is heard saying. —*PTI*

EXECUTION STALLED

India's Grand Mufti brings relief for nurse's family

KOZHIKODE, 15 JULY

Last-minute diplomatic and religious interventions have successfully delayed the scheduled execution of Indian nurse Nimisha Priya in Yemen, sources confirmed on Tuesday.

The breakthrough came after prominent Sufi scholar Sheikh Habib Umar bin Hafiz intervened at the request of influential Sunni leader Kanthapuram AP Aboobacker Musliyar, also known as Sheikh Abubakr Ahmad, the Grand Mufti of India. Talks between representatives of Sheikh Habib and the family of Yemeni national Talal Abdo Mahdi – allegedly murdered by Priya in 2017 – were held in Dhamar, Mahdi's hometown, on Tuesday morning.

This brought relief to the family, with her husband expressing satisfaction over the collective effort made by government and other organisations.

"We are happy and relieved. I am sure efforts will continue to avert her execution and bring her back safely," her husband, Tomy Thomas, told PTI.

Thomas said they have a daughter studying in class XIII, and that the child has been kept away from these developments.

The victim's close relative, who is also the Chief Justice of the Hodeidah State Court and a Yemeni Shura Council member, participated in the meeting following Sheikh Habib's advice.

A follower of the Sufi order, and the son of a respected Sufi leader himself, he is also expected to meet the Attorney General to seek a deferral of the execution.

"This is the first time anyone has been able to establish contact with the family, thanks to Kanthapuram's intervention," they said. —*PTI*

The breakthrough came after prominent Sufi scholar Sheikh Habib Umar bin Hafiz intervened at the request of influential Sunni leader Kanthapuram AP Aboobacker Musliyar to stall the execution of nurse Nimisha Priya in Yemen **PHOTO: X**

AI MUSIC BAND

Velvet Sundown, a new rock band with 1 million listerners that climbed the No.1 rank on Spotify's Viral 50 chart in Britain, Norway and Sweden, has declared itself to be an AI-built band. The band, which was inspired by a 60s rock and roll theme, stated that both its musicians and songs are created using AI. Experts are warning people who listen music on such platform to be cautious of false informations

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Migrant detention sparks row ahead of Bengal polls

The detention of Bengali-speaking migrant labourers in BJP-ruled states and their profiling as suspected Bangladeshis has ignited a fresh political firestorm in West Bengal, with the ruling TMC reigniting its Bengali identity pitch that had blunted the BJP's Hindutva juggernaut in the 2021 Assembly polls.

With months to go for the 2026 Assembly polls, what began as isolated complaints of harassment of migrant workers has now evolved into a full-blown political flashpoint.

The Mamata Banerjee-led TMC is going all guns blazing to turn what was once a socio-economic crisis into an emotive electoral issue, accusing BJP governments in Odisha, Assam, Delhi, Maharashtra, and Gujarat of "institutional and linguistic profiling" and "criminalisation of poverty" under guise of national security.

From branding the crackdown as a "humiliation of Bengalis" to planning massive protest rallies in Kolkata, including a 16 July, march to be led by Banerjee herself, the TMC is rekindling the sub-nationalist fervour it used to great effect in 2021 through the slogan "Bangla Nijer Meyeke Chaye" (Bengal wants its own daughter).

The flashpoint first emerged in June, when at least seven Bengali-speaking people were pushed back to Bangladesh from Maharashtra and other states, allegedly without proper citizenship verification or intimation to the West Bengal government.

They were later repatriated through legal and diplomatic intervention after their Indian citizenship was confirmed.

Last week, Odisha Police detained 444 workers from various Bengal districts on suspicion of being illegal immigrants, though 50 were later released after submitting documents.

In Delhi, electricity and water supply were snapped in Bengali-dominated Jai Hind Colony, following a civil court order amid allegations of power theft, adding further fuel to the fire.

"There are over 1.5 crore migrant workers in Bengal who live with dignity. But the same cannot be said for BJP-ruled states, where Bengalis are being treated as infiltrators in their own country. Speaking Bengali does not make one Bangladeshi," said TMC MP Samirul Islam.

The Bengal government is now exploring legal options against what it calls the "unconstitutional deportation" of Indian citizens.

Seizing the moment, the TMC has pivoted its campaign narrative to champion the rights and dignity of Bengali-speaking migrant labourers, an estimated 22.5 lakh of whom work across in construction, brick kilns, factories, and informal sectors across the country.

"Our people are being treated like infiltrators just because they are poor and speak Bengali," said senior TMC leader Firhad Hakim.

Sociologist Supriya Basu called the developments part of an effort to "impose North Indian Hindutva culture on Bengal."

"The large migrant population could have been an administrative liability, highlighting Bengal's job crisis. But BJP's aggressive profiling has flipped the narrative in TMC's favour."

The BJP has countered TMC's allegations by citing national security and illegal immigration concerns.

BJP's IT cell Chief Amit Malviya claimed over 300 of the 444 detained in Odisha had "fake or unverifiable" documents.

Newly appointed Bengal BJP Chief Samik Bhattacharya went a step further, alleging a deliberate TMC-backed infiltration plan.

While the Congress and CPI(M) have condemned the harassment and arbitrary arrests, they have carefully distanced themselves from TMC's more emotive "Bengali vs outsider" pitch.

Political analyst Suman Bhattacharya summed it up, "In Bengal, pride often trumps policy. Banerjee knows how to tap into that. TMC, which was being cornered on multiple fronts, has now found a potent counter-narrative through this migrant issue."

Political scientist Maidul Islam predicted this would become a major political flashpoint in 2026 polls.

After its 2021 triumph, the TMC had tried to rebrand itself as a national party with pan-Indian ambitions, toning down the sub-nationalist plank and inducting non-Bengali MPs like Shatrughan Sinha, Kirti Azad, and Yusuf Pathan.

But with Assembly polls looming and the Hindutva narrative gaining steam, the party appears to be returning to its strongest emotional card — Bengali pride.

Whether the next election will replicate the "Bengali versus outsider" wave of 2021 or produce a more fractured verdict depends on how each party can sustain its competing narratives. *—PTI*

BJP's IT cell Chief Amit Malviya claimed over 300 of the 444 detained in Odisha had fake or unverifiable documents ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Bangladesh struggling to contain fallout of uprising

Bangladesh was on the cusp of charting a new beginning last year after its former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was removed from power in a student-led uprising, ending her 15-year rule and forcing her to flee to India.

As the head of a new interim government, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus promised to hold a credible election to return to democracy, initiate electoral and constitutional reforms and restore peace on the streets after hundreds were killed in weeks of violence that began on 15 July, 2024.

A year later, the Yunus-led administration has struggled to contain the fallout of the uprising. Bangladesh finds itself mired in a growing political uncertainty, religious polarisation and a challenging law-and-order situation.

Here's what to know about Bangladesh a year after the protests that toppled Hasina:

Uncertainty about the future of democracy looms large in Bangladesh ***PHOTO: ANI***

Chaotic political landscape

Uncertainty about the future of democracy looms large in Bangladesh.

The student protesters who toppled Hasina formed a new political party, promising to break the overwhelming influence of two major dynastic political parties — the Bangladesh Nationalists Party(BNP), and Hasina's Awami League.

But the party's opponents have accused it of being close to the Yunus-led administration and creating chaos for political mileage by using state institutions.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's political landscape has further fragmented after the country's largest Islamist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, returned to politics more than a decade after it was suppressed by Hasina's government.

Aligned with the student-led party, it's trying to fill the vacuum left by the Awami League, which was banned in May. Its leader, Hasina, is facing trial for crimes against humanity. The strength of Jamaat-e-Islami, which opposed Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971, is unknown.

Both BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami party are now at loggerheads over establishing supremacy within the administration and judiciary, and even university campuses.

They are also differing over the timing of a new parliamentary election. Yunus has announced that the polls would be held in April next year, but poor law and order situation and a lack of clear-cut political consensus over it have created confusion. The Chief of Bangladesh's military also wanted an election in December this year — a stance Yunus didn't like.

"Post-revolution honeymoons often don't last long, and Bangladesh is no exception," says Michael Kugelman, a Washington-based South Asia analyst and senior fellow of Asia Pacific Foundation.

Yunus wants reforms before election

Yunus has delayed an election because he wants reforms — from changes to the constitution and elections to the judiciary and police. Discussions with political parties, except Hasina's Awami League, are ongoing.

Some of the reforms include putting a limit on how many times a person can become the Prime Minister, introduction of a two-tier parliament, and appointment of a Chief Justice. There appears to be little consensus over some basic reforms. While both BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami parties have agreed to some of them with conditions, other proposals for basic constitutional reforms have become a sticking point.

The Jamaat-e-Islami also wants to give the interim government more time to complete reforms before heading into polls, while BNP has been calling for an early election. The student-led party mostly follows the pattern of the Jamaat-e-Islami party.

Human rights and the rise of Islamists

Human rights in Bangladesh have remained a serious concern under Yunus.

Minority groups, especially Hindus, have blamed his administration for failing to protect them adequately. Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council says minority Hindus and others have been targeted in hundreds of attacks over the last year. Hasina's party has also blamed the interim government for arresting tens of thousands of its supporters. The Yunus-led administration denies these allegations.

Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, says while the interim government has stopped enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions that had occurred under the Hasina government, "there has been little progress on lasting security sector reforms or to deliver on pledge to create robust, independent institutions."

Meanwhile, Islamist factions — some of whom have proposed changes to women's rights and demanded introduction of Sharia law — are vying for power. Many of them are planning to build alliances with bigger parties like the BNP or the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Such factions have historically struggled to gain significant electoral support despite Bangladesh being a Muslim majority, and their rise is expected to further fragment the country's political landscape.

Diplomatic pivot and balancing with global powers

During Hasina's 15-year rule, Bangladesh was India's closest partner in South Asia. After her ouster, the Yunus-led administration has moved closer to China.

Yunus' first state visit was to China in March, a trip that saw him secure investments, loans and grants.

Globally, Yunus seems to have strong backing from the West and UN, and it appears Bangladesh will continue its foreign policy, which has long tried to find a balance between multiple foreign powers.

But Kugelman says the country's biggest challenge may be the "Trump factor."

In January, Trump administration suspended USAID funds to Bangladesh, which had sought significant levels of US support during a critical rebuild period post Hasina's ouster. *—PTI*

Of tragedies and tenacity: The story of 114-year-old marathon runner

It's never too late to start over, goes the old adage and if ever there was proof needed that it actually isn't, one could always marvel at the life of Fauja Singh.

Singh, the widely-admired 114-year-old, whose career as a marathon runner began when he was 89 & propelled him to the status of a global icon, died on Monday night.

It was a heartbreakingly abrupt end despite his age. He was hit by a yet-to-be-identified vehicle while out for a walk at Beas Pind, his native village in Jalandhar.

The frail man, who weathered many a personal storms with his resilience and "nonchalance", had spent a better part of his running career in Britain and returned to his roots just about three years ago after retiring.

"We would always tell him that someone his age running in India would always run the risk of being hit given how reckless the driving here is. This is what ultimately happened unfortunately," said his biographer Khushwant Singh, whose book "The Turbaned Tornado" documents the celebrated runner's life.

Fauja's story of strength began long after time slows down for most, especially those who have been mauled by the life's many tragedies. He too was battling demons of his own.

Veteran marathon runner Fauja Singh ***PHOTO: PTI***

Overwhelmed by the loss of his youngest son in the mid '90s, Fauja found solace in running with a local club in Essex after moving out of India following the death of his wife and daughter.

"The villagers would tell one of his sons to take him to the UK because he would keep visiting the cremation ground and sit there for hours. So, eventually he moved to Ilford," said Khushwant.

Once there, Fauja endured another loss before he chanced upon a running club. And what started as a hobby to take his mind off the circumstances that threatened to consume him, became the driving force of his life.

He went on to run marathons, including the famed ones in London, New York and and Hong Kong, and inspire awe for clocking some brilliant timings for a 90-plus man born with weak legs.

In the process, he also became a torch-bearer at the 2012 London Olympics and was honoured by the late Queen Elizabeth II for his contribution to sport and charity.

"Before that meeting with the Queen we had to repeatedly counsel him 'Baba, Queen naal sirf hath milana hai, japphi ni paani jinwein bacheyan nu tussi paande ho' (Baba, you have to only shake hands with the Queen, don't hug her like you hug kids when you meet them)," Khushwant, whose long association with the centenarian started in 2005, recalled.

"He was also someone who had no greed. Every rupee he earned by running marathons went to charity. Once he became famous, people would walk up to him to give money even in Gurudwaras but he would straightaway put that money into the donation boxes there," he said.

Like a true blue large-hearted romanticised Punjabi, Fauja loved his pinnis (sweet balls of ghee, flour, and jaggery dotted with dry fruits) and the occasional strawberry shake from McDonald's.

But he was also a disciplined runner who would train vigorously before his races.

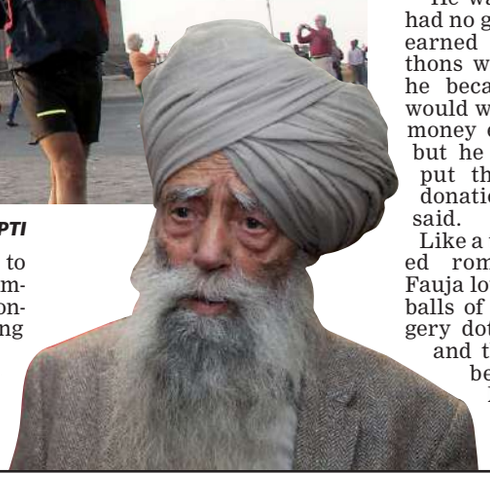
Among the most memorable of his runs was in 2011 when he turned 100. The invitational meet in Toronto was named in his honour and he broke several world records for his age group.

But none of them were taken into consideration by Guinness World Records as he did not have a birth certificate to prove his age.

"He was not bothered by any of that. He just enjoyed the attention that he got. I once asked him 'Baba, maran ton darr lagda? (Baba, are you afraid of death?). He said 'haan, bilkul lagda. Haje te mele shuru hoye ne (Yes, of course. The fun has only started for me)," Khushwant said, remembering one of their conversations on mortality.

In the end, Fauja lived up to the values that his name reflected. He fought the battle of life with the resolve of a soldier.

"He travelled the world but never once bothered to ask about who would take care of his stay and other requirements. He just had confidence in the system and so many times, when I was with him, he would simply say 'Sangat saambh laigi' (the community will take care of me)." *—PTI*



- Fauja Singh, the widely-admired 114-year-old, whose career as a marathon runner began when he was 89 & propelled him to the status of a global icon, died on Monday night.

PHOTO: X

Cuomo remains in NYC mayor's race as independent

NEW YORK, 15 JULY

Andrew Cuomo, former Governor of New York, has announced his intention to run for mayor of New York City as an independent candidate following his defeat in the Democratic primary to progressive candidate Zohran Mamdani. This development comes amidst intense scrutiny of Mamdani's leftist policies from Republican leaders, including comments from former President Donald Trump, who labelled him a "Communist lunatic." Meanwhile, Ohio Republican Vivek Ramaswamy has also weighed in, calling Mamdani a "radical socialist" and launching a campaign ad encouraging New Yorkers to "move to Ohio". He wrote on X, "Capitalism defeats socialism. There's a better way: move to Ohio." The contest is heating up as the polls approach. ***—PTI/ANI***

Nepal minister resigns amid bribery allegations

KATHMANDU, 15 JULY

Rajkumar Gupta, Nepal's Minister for Federal Affairs and General Administration, resigned on Tuesday following allegations in a bribery scandal. An audio recording surfaced, allegedly capturing Gupta negotiating bribes linked to the transfer and appointment of government personnel. Accompanying a complaint to the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority were photographs showing two bags purportedly containing money. Gupta has denied the allegations, "I have now fallen victim to such a false allegation." He stated his resignation was aimed at allowing an impartial investigation to proceed. This comes after a directive from Prime Minister KP Oli, who summoned Gupta to his official residence and urged him to step down. ***—PTI***

11 missing after boat capsises in Indonesia

PADANG, 15 JULY

Indonesian rescuers are actively searching for 11 missing individuals, including three children, following a speedboat capsizing during a storm near Indonesia's Mentawai Islands. The incident occurred while the boat was navigating the Sipora Strait after departing from Sikakap. The vessel was intended to reach the nearby town of Tuapejat within two hours and was carrying 16 passengers, mostly local officials. Seven survivors, including two crew members, were rescued and are reported to be in stable condition. Eyewitnesses indicated that the boat was caught in unexpectedly high waves. Rescue operations involving a ship and inflatable boats are on. ***—PTI***

Trump says he's not done with Putin

The American President says Britain would fight for the US, but not NATO

WASHINGTON, 15 JULY

US President Donald Trump said that he is disappointed but not done with his Russian Counterpart Vladimir Putin, in an exclusive phone call with the BBC.

"I trust almost nobody," he said, hours after he threatened Moscow with sanctions if they didn't end the war with Ukraine in 50 days. "I'm disappointed in him, but I'm not done with him, but I'm disappointed in him," Trump remarked.

"We had a deal done four times and then you go home and you see just attacked a nursing home in Kyiv. And so what the hell was that all about?"

Trump had threatened Russia with sanctions during his meeting with NATO Chief Mark Rutte.

However, during the interview, he suggested that the UK would fight for the US, but NATO wouldn't. "One of the problems with NATO, as I said, we have to fight for them, but will they actually fight for us if we had a war?" Trump claimed.

Trump addresses the media at Joint Base Andrews after attending a Club World Cup final soccer match in New Jersey ***PHOTO: PTI***

"And I'm not sure I can say it, but I will say this, I believe that the UK would fight with us.... I think that they would be with us. I'm not sure that a lot of the other countries would be."

Trump had also recently slapped the EU, one of the US' biggest trading partners, with a 30 per cent tariff.

In contrast, he said that Britain's apparent willingness to fight for the US was a factor in the exemptions granted to the UK.

"Look, that's why I made a deal with them, and I haven't made a deal, I mean, I've made some other deals, but for the most part, in terms of your competitors, and in terms of the European Union, I haven't made a deal."

Trump also said of Keir Starmer: "I really like the PM a lot, even though he is a liberal" *—Agencies*

US imposes 17% duty on fresh Mexican tomatoes

The US government said Monday it is immediately placing a 17 per cent duty on most fresh Mexican tomatoes after negotiations ended without an agreement to avert the tariff. "It's unfair and against not only Mexican producers, but on the American industry. The ground that Mexican fresh tomatoes has gained in the US is because of the quality of the product, not from unfair practices," Mexico's Economic Secretary Marcelo Ebrard wrote.

SC allows Trump to lay off 1,400 Edu staffers

The Supreme Court is allowing President Donald Trump to put his plan to dismantle the Education Department back on track — and to go through with laying off nearly 1,400 employees. With the three liberal justices in dissent, the court on Monday paused an order from US District Judge Myong Joun in Boston, who issued a preliminary injunction reversing the layoffs and calling into question the broader plan.

US climate change report not to be on NASA website

NASA said the US government would publish the legally mandated scientific report on how climate change is endangering the nation. "The USGCRP (the government agency that oversees and used to host the report) met its statutory requirements by presenting its reports to Congress. NASA has no legal obligations to host globalchange.gov's data," NASA Press Secretary Bethany Stevens said.

EU terms 'unacceptable' Trump's 30% tariffs

EU trade ministers have agreed that US President Donald Trump's announcement of 30 per cent tariffs on the European Union was "absolutely unacceptable", and they are studying a new set of countermeasures to respond to the move. Maroš Šefcovic, the EU's trade representative said the commission was sharing proposals with the 27 member countries "for the second list of goods accounting of USD 84 billion worth of US imports.

Russia doesn't care about Trump's 'theatrical ultimatum'

MOSCOW, 15 JULY

- Russia's state-run TASS reported that "even 100 per cent tariffs will be of no use amid a record low bilateral trade" between the two nations

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev called US President Donald Trump's 50-day deadline a "theatrical ultimatum".

In Russia's first official reaction to Trump saying he will attack Moscow tariffs, Medvedev wrote on X, "Trump issued a theatrical ultimatum to the Kremlin. The world shuddered, expecting the consequences. Belligerent Europe was disappointed. Russia didn't care".

State-run TASS reported that "even 100 per cent tariffs will be of no use amid a record low bilateral trade" between the two nations.

At the same time, the Kremlin said that said Trump's threat of sanctions on buyers of Russian exports, are serious and require analysis, according to Al Jazeera.

"We certainly need time to analyse what was said in Washington. And if and when President Putin deems it necessary, he will definitely comment," Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

In an apparent reference to news of new weapons deliveries to Ukraine, Peskov said: "Decisions which are being made in Washington, in NATO countries, and squarely in Brussels, are perceived by the Ukrainian side not as a signal for peace, but as a signal to continue the war." *—Agencies*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko at a meeting ***PHOTO: X***

Ukraine's PM quits, Zelenskyy proposes Svyrydenko to lead

KYIV, 15 JULY

Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced his resignation on Tuesday, marking the first formal step in what is expected to be a major government reshuffle by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

In a message on Telegram, Shmyhal wrote, "I am tendering my resignation from the post of the Prime Minister of Ukraine." Zelenskyy has nominated 39-year-old Yuliia Svyrydenko, current Deputy Prime Minister and Ukraine's first female Economy Minister, as his successor.

Svyrydenko has played a pivotal role in Ukraine's economic diplomacy, leading key negotiations with Western partners and securing a US–Ukraine mineral agreement.

The reshuffle comes amid intensifying Russian assaults, continued drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities, and mounting pressure on the front lines. It also coincides with growing concerns about sustaining Western support.

President Zelenskyy is keen to bolster ties with the United States, particularly with Donald Trump pledging more arms for Ukraine, funded by Europe. Zelenskyy also hinted that Shmyhal could become Defence Minister, freeing current defence chief Rustem Umerov to potentially replace US Ambassador Oksana Markarova. Umerov, appointed in September 2023, aimed to reform a defence ministry plagued by past corruption but faced criticism for ongoing mismanagement. *—Agencies*

Syria announces ceasefire after sectarian violence

BUSRA AL-HARIR, 15 JULY

Syria's Defence Minister announced a ceasefire shortly after government forces entered a key city in Sweida province on Tuesday. It came a day after sectarian clashes killed nearly 100, and Israel launched a strike in the area.

Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra said that after an "agreement with the city's notables and dignitaries, we will respond only to the sources of fire and deal with any targeting by outlaw groups."

The clashes began with a series of tit-for-tat kidnappings and attacks between members of local Sunni Bedouin tribes and Druze armed factions in the southern province, a centre of the Druze community.

Syrian Defense Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra ***PHOTO: X***

Government security forces that were sent in on Monday to restore order also clashed with Druze armed groups. During the day, Israel struck Syrian government military tank and said it was acting to protect the Druze religious minority. In Israel, the Druze are seen as a loyal minority and often serve in the armed forces.

"The presence of (tanks) in southern Syria could pose a threat to the State of Israel," said the IDF, adding that it, "will not allow the existence of a military threat in southern Syria and will act against it."

More than half the roughly 1 million Druze worldwide live in Syria. Several clashes have broken out between government loyalist and Druze fighters since the fall of president Bashar Assad in early December. *—PTI*

Ultra-orthodox party's exit shakes Netanyahu's coalition

TAIPEI, 15 JULY

The ultra-orthodox United Torah Judaism announced its exit from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition government due to disagreements over a military draft law that would exempt many of its members from conscription.

The party said it was quitting over disagreements surrounding a Bill that would codify broad military draft exemptions for their constituents, many of whom study Jewish texts instead of enlisting in the military. The issue has long divided Jewish Israelis.

The departure of a party that has long served as a kingmaker in Israeli politics doesn't immediately threaten Netanyahu's rule. But, if it comes into effect within 48 hours, it will leave him with a slim majority in a government that could more heavily rely on two far-right parties.

The development comes Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight killed at least 93 people.

The United Torah Judaism exited Netanyahu's government over a military draft exemption bill ***PHOTO: X***

THE HAGUE GROUP

The Hague Group, consisting of some 20 countries including South Africa, Cuba Malaysia, Spain, Ireland will meet in Colombia next week to discuss "concrete measures" against Israel over the Gaza war.

Founded earlier this year in the Netherlands, the bloc believes Israel is benefiting from an "exceptionalism" in international law. This comes as European diplomats met in Brussels to discuss a new humanitarian aid agreement with Israel to alleviate the crisis in Gaza. *—PTI & Agencies*

Albanese complains to Xi about Chinese naval exercises

BEIJING, 15 JULY

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese expressed concerns to President Xi Jinping about a Chinese naval live-fire exercise that occurred off the Australian coast, forcing commercial aircraft to alter their flight paths. During a Tuesday meeting, Albanese described the live-fire drills, which took place in February when a Chinese flotilla navigated international waters in the Tasman Sea, as part of a broader display of military strength.

"President Xi stated that China engages in exercises much like Australia does," Albanese told reporters, highlighting Australia's own military operations in the South China Sea. "There was no breach of international law by China, but that we were concerned about the notice and the way that it happened, including the live-fire exercises".

The leaders also aimed to bolster trade ties despite ongoing discord regarding regional security and human rights. Xi emphasised the importance of finding common ground, a sentiment Albanese supported. With Australia's economy significantly reliant on exports to China, including iron ore, Albanese has sought to mend relations since his election in 2022.

During his weeklong visit, which commenced in Shanghai, discussions also focused on cooperation in tourism and carbon emission reductions in mining and steel production. *—PTI*

UK govt secretly resettles thousands of Afghans

LONDON, 15 JULY

The UK government has disclosed that thousands of Afghans, including many who assisted British troops, were quietly resettled in Britain following a data leak risked their safety from the Taliban. Defence Secretary John Healey announced that a dataset with details of nearly 19,000 Afghan applicants was mistakenly released in 2022, prompting a covert resettlement initiative distinct from existing programmes. Around 4,500 individuals, comprising applicants and their families, have already been relocated under this scheme, which is projected to bring approximately 6,900 people to the UK at a cost of £850 million. The Labour government has now made the programme public, following an independent review which found minimal evidence that the leaked data increased risks for those involved. ***—PTI***

INDIA AMONG THE LAX

UN: 14M kids did not receive a single vaccine shot in 2024

LONDON, 15 JULY

At least 14 million children did not receive a single vaccine last year – about the same number as the year before — according to UN health officials. Nine countries accounted for more than half of those unprotected children.

In their annual estimate of global vaccine coverage, released Tuesday, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF said about 89 per cent of children under one year old got a first dose of the diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough vaccine in 2024, the same as in 2023. About 85 per cent completed the three-dose series, up from 84 per cent in 2023.

UN experts said that access to vaccines remained "deeply unequal" and that conflict and humanitarian crises quickly unraveled progress; Sudan had the lowest reported coverage against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. The data showed that nine countries accounted for 52 per cent of all children who missed out on immunisations entirely: Nigeria, India, Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Yemen, Afghanistan and Angola.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Officials said that the collapse of international aid due to the US will likely worsen the situation. In January, US President Trump withdrew the country from the WHO, froze nearly all humanitarian aid and later moved to close the US AID Agency. And last month, Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr said it was pulling the billions of dollars the US had previously pledged to the vaccines alliance Gavi, saying the group had "ignored the science".

WHO and UNICEF did note that coverage against measles rose slightly, with 76 per cent of children worldwide receiving both vaccine doses. But experts say measles vaccine rates need to reach 95 per cent to prevent outbreaks of the extremely contagious disease. WHO noted that 60 countries reported big measles outbreaks last year. *—PTI*

Heavy rain and flash flooding lead to the declaration of a state of emergency in parts of New York and New Jersey ***PHOTO: X***

EMERGENCY DECLARED AS HEAVY RAINS CAUSE FLASH FLOODS IN NORTHEAST US

NEW YORK, 15 JULY

Heavy rains and flash flooding have wreaked havoc across the Northeast US, particularly affecting New York and New Jersey, prompting state emergency declarations. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy advised residents to remain indoors as vehicles were stranded and subway lines closed due to severe flooding. Significant rainfall, measuring up to 6 inches in some areas, resulted in emergency responses and local rescues. The New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority reported transit disruptions, with numerous subway services affected.

Meanwhile, a wildfire devastated the historic Grand Canyon Lodge, ignited by a lightning strike on 4 July. Initially allowed to burn, the fire escalated dramatically over the weekend, leading to the destruction of over 70 structures.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs called for a federal investigation into the National Park Service's fire management decisions. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold declines by ₹200 to ₹99,370/10g

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Gold prices declined by Rs 200 to Rs 99,370 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday due to fresh selling by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 99,570 per 10g on Monday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped by Rs 200 to Rs 98,800 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) from the precious close of Rs 99,000 per 10g. Silver prices had rallied by Rs 5,000 to hit a record high of Rs 1,15,000 per kg on Monday. Meanwhile, spot gold rose by USD 20.62 or 0.62 per cent to USD 3,364.14 per ounce in the international markets. *—PTI*

Rupee rises by 10P, closes at 85.82 against USD

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

The rupee appreciated 10 paise to close at 85.82 (provisional) against the US dollar tracking the weakness of the greenback in the overseas market and a decline in global crude oil prices. However, foreign fund outflows, along with uncertainties on the outcome of the ongoing India-US trade talks, capped sharper gains in the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, rupee opened at 85.97 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 85.75-85.97 before settling at 85.82 (provisional), up 10 paise from its previous close. The rupee depreciated 12 paise to close at 85.92 against the US dollar on Monday. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.11 per cent to 97.97. *—PTI*

Bomb threat hoax at Mumbai's BSE building

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

The iconic Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) building in south Mumbai received a bomb threat email, which turned out to be a hoax after a search of the premises, police said on Tuesday. A BSE employee received an email on Sunday from an email ID mentioning the name of a political leader from south India, an official said. The email claimed four RDX IEDs had been planted in the BSE building and warned of a blast around 3pm on Monday, he said. The BSE employee alerted the stock exchange authorities, who then approached the Mumbai Police. A team of the Mumbai Police and the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad conducted a search, the official said, adding that nothing suspicious was found. *—PTI*

AstraZeneca's bladder cancer drug gets approval

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

AstraZeneca Pharma India on Tuesday said it has received approval from the national drug regulator to import and distribute Durvalumab solution for infusion for the treatment of muscle-invasive bladder cancer. The newly approved indication from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) allows the use of Durvalumab in combination with gemcitabine and cisplatin for the treatment of adult patients with muscle-invasive bladder cancer, the company said. "We are deeply focused on closing gaps in access and accelerating the availability of cutting-edge therapies in high-burden countries like India," AstraZeneca Pharma Country President and MD Praveen Akkinepally said. Bladder cancer is amongst the top 10 most common cancers worldwide. In India, 22,500 new cases and over 12,000 deaths were recorded in 2022. *—PTI*

India's 1st Tesla showroom launches ₹60 lakh Model Y

Deliveries expected to begin in the third quarter of 2025

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

Tesla has officially entered the world's third-largest automobile market, India, with the launch of its electric Midsize SUV, the Tesla Model Y, priced from nearly Rs 60 lakhs.

Currently, the Model Y will be the only model available in the country. It will be offered in two variants; Rear-Wheel Drive, priced at Rs 60 lakhs, and Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive, priced at Rs 68 lakhs.

Customers can also opt for Tesla's Full Self-Driving package, which adds an additional cost of Rs 6 lakhs over the base prices. The model will be available in six colours, of which Stealth Grey is the only one offered at no additional charge. The other colours: Pearl White Multi-Coat, Diamond Black, Ultra Red, Quicksilver, and Glacier Blue, will come at an extra cost.

Interior options include white and black themes, and the vehicle will feature a five-seat configuration.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis unveils Tesla's Model Y during the inauguration of the company's first experience centre in India at the Maker Maxity Commercial Complex, Bandra Kurla Complex, in Mumbai on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

As of now, deliveries and registration are available only in Mumbai, Delhi, and Gurugram, as listed on Tesla's official portal.

Deliveries of the Tesla Model Y are expected to begin in the third quarter of 2025.

Earlier today, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated Tesla's first Experience Centre in India, located at Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai, marking a significant milestone for the company's entry into the Indian market.

The minister said, "I welcome Tesla here in Mumbai. Tesla has opened an experience centre here, and it is a statement that Tesla has arrived and it's a statement they Tesla has arrived in the right city and right state."

In April this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed potential collaborations in technology and innovation with Elon Musk.

With the opening of its first showroom in Mumbai, Tesla aims to test the Indian market and lay the groundwork for its premium electric vehicle offerings in one of the world's fastest-growing automotive sectors. *—ANI*

Sebi green-flags WeWork India IPO

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

WeWork India has received approval from market regulator SEBI to proceed with its Initial Public Offering (IPO), allowing promoters to monetise their holdings as demand for flexible office spaces surges across India's top cities.

Bengaluru-based WeWork India Management Ltd, which submitted its Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) in February, obtained SEBI's observation letter on 8 July. The company, founded in 2017, is promoted by Embassy Group and holds exclusive rights to the 'WeWork' brand in India.

The proposed IPO is entirely an Offer for Sale (OFS) of up to 4.37 crore equity shares. Embassy Buildcon LLP will offload up to 3.34 crore shares, while WeWork Global's affiliate, 1 Ariel Way Tenant Ltd, will sell up to 1.03 crore shares. As it is an OFS, WeWork India will not receive any funds from the issue. In FY 2023–24, the company posted a net loss of Rs 135.83 crore on income of Rs 1,737.16 crore. However, it reported a profit of Rs 174.13 crore in the first half of FY 2024–25, with income reaching Rs 960.76 crore. A rights issue in January 2025 raised Rs 500 crore to reduce debt and fund growth. *—PTI*

Sensex climbed 317.45 points to settle at 82,570.91 *PHOTO: PTI*

Markets rebound post 4-day decline

MUMBAI, 15 JULY

Stock markets snapped the four-day falling streak on Tuesday with the benchmark Sensex rebounding by 317 points on buying in auto and pharma shares amid a decline in retail inflation to a more than six-year low, nearing the RBI's comfort zone.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 317.45 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 82,570.91. During the day, it jumped 490.16 points or 0.59 per cent to 82,743.62.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged higher by 113.50 points or 0.45 per cent to 25,195.80.

In the last four trading days, the Sensex dropped 1,459.05 points or 1.74 per cent and the Nifty declined by 440 points or 1.72 per cent.

Among Sensex firms, Sun Pharma, Trent, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were the major gainers.

However, HCL Tech declined 3.31 per cent after the IT services firm reported a 9.7 per cent drop in consolidated net profit for the June quarter, hurt by higher expenses and the one-time impact of a client bankruptcy.

Eternal, Tata Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank were also the laggards.

Retail inflation declined to over six-year low of 2.1 per cent in June, nearing the RBI's comfort zone, on account of subdued prices of food items, including vegetables, driven by widespread monsoon. The Consumer Price Index-based inflation was 2.82 per cent in May and 5.08 per cent in June 2024. *—PTI*

HCLTech shares drop over 4%

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Shares of IT services company HCL Technologies fell over 4 per cent on Tuesday after it reported a 9.7 per cent year-on-year drop in consolidated net profit for the June quarter, weighed down by rising costs and a one-time client bankruptcy impact.

The stock declined 4.28 per cent to Rs 1,550.50 on the BSE and 4.30 per cent to Rs 1,550 on the NSE.

HCL Technologies posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 3,844 crore for Q1 FY26, compared to Rs 4,257 crore in the same period last year. Revenue from operations rose 8.1 per cent year-on-year to Rs 30,349 crore, up from Rs 28,057 crore.

Total expenses increased by 9.2 per cent, driven by higher employee benefit, outsourcing, and finance costs, which eroded profitability.

PHOTO: @HCL

CEO and MD C Vijayakumar announced a restructuring programme to enhance operational agility in the AI era. This will include rationalising underutilised facilities—mainly outside India—and scaling down talent in certain overseas geographies. The restructuring, set to begin this quarter, is expected to help restore margins to the 18–19 per cent range, though it will involve incremental costs.

Despite the Q1 dip, the company raised the lower end of its full-year revenue growth forecast, citing robust deal bookings and a stable business environment. *—PTI*

Sebi to launch VCF settlement plan on 21 July

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

India's markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), has introduced a settlement scheme beginning 21 July, 2025 to address violations of winding-up provisions by migrated Venture Capital Funds (VCFs). The VCF Settlement Scheme 2025 will remain open until 19 January, 2026, SEBI announced on Tuesday.

The scheme aims to resolve issues where VCFs, despite migrating to the Alternative Investment Funds (AIF) regime, continue to hold unliquidated investments beyond their fund tenure without completing the winding-up process. SEBI had repealed the VCF regulations following the introduction of the AIF framework in May 2012. Some VCFs were unable to liquidate their holdings in time and faced difficulties in completing the winding-up process. In response, SEBI allowed such VCFs to migrate to the AIF regime and provided a one-year extension for liquidation.

The final date to apply for migration is 19 July, 2025. *—PTI*

Exports remain flat in June at $35.14B

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

India's exports remained flat at USD 35.14 billion in June due to global economic uncertainties, while trade deficit narrowed to a four-month low of USD 18.78 billion during the month, the government data showed on Tuesday.

Exports in June last year were at USD 35.16 billion.

Imports declined 3.71 per cent year-on-year to USD 53.92 billion during the month due to fall in the inbound shipments of crude oil and gold.

Key export sectors, including petroleum, fabrics, gems and jewellery, leather, iron ore, oil seeds, cashew, spices, tobacco, and coffee, recorded negative growth during the month under review.

The shipments of petroleum products dipped 15.92 per cent to USD 4.61 billion in June, and 15.63 per cent to USD 17.4 billion during the first quarter.

However, exports of engineering, tea, rice, ready-made garments of all textiles, chemicals, marine products, and pharma have registered positive growth.

Electronic goods' shipments rose 46.93 per cent to USD 4.14 billion in June.

During April–June 2025–26, exports increased 1.92 per cent to USD 112.17 billion, while imports rose 4.24 per cent to USD 179.44 billion, data said.

The merchandise trade deficit during the April–June 2025 period widened to USD 67.26 billion. *—PTI*

Nvidia gets Trump's nod to sell AI chips in China

BANGKOK, 15 JULY

Nvidia's CEO, Jensen Huang, says the technology giant has won approval from the Trump administration to sell its advanced H20 computer chips used to develop artificial intelligence to China.

The news that came in a company blog post late Monday also spoke about the coup on China's state-run CGTN television network.

"The US of the world's AI researchers are in China. It's so innovative and dynamic in China that it's really important for American companies to be able to compete and serve China's market," Huang said.

Huang, who recently met with Trump and other US policymakers, is in Beijing this week to attend a supply chain conference and speak with Chinese officials.

China vs US trade rivalry affects Nvidia

Nvidia has profited enormously from the rapid adoption of AI, becoming the first company to have its market value surpass USD 4 trillion last week.

However, the trade rivalry between the US and China has been weighing heavily on the industry. *—PTI*

Gadkari miffed at lax consultants

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said the government will penalise those consultants who do not adhere to proper procedures in making detailed project reports (DPRs) for highways and tunnels.

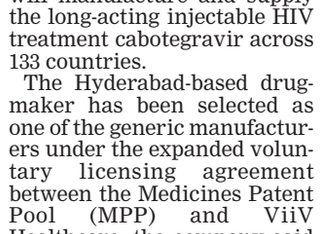
A DPR is a comprehensive blueprint for a road construction project, outlining all technical, financial and logistics details necessary for its execution. "The quality of DPRs prepared by consultancy firms is not goodContractors are also not doing a good job," Gadkari said. *—PTI*

Infosys launches programme to help five lakh job seekers

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Infosys Foundation, the philanthropic and CSR arm of Infosys, has launched the Infosys Springboard Livelihood Programme, aiming to help 500,000 job seekers in India secure meaningful employment by 2030. For the first phase, the Foundation has committed over Rs 200 crore.

The initiative will be delivered through Infosys Springboard, the company's flagship digital learning platform. It offers support not only for skilling and education, but also for enabling sustainable careers. The programme targets both graduates and undergraduates across STEM and non-STEM sectors.



Participants will gain access to training in cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, as well as functional areas like digital marketing and finance. Foundational training in communication skills, time management, and interview techniques will also be provided to improve employability. *—PTI*

PhonePe ropes in Meta ex-official

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Fintech firm PhonePe on Tuesday said it has appointed former Meta executive Shivnath Thukral as Vice President for public Policy and Government Affairs, effective immediately.

Thukral, who led regulatory strategy and advocacy on technology and financial inclusion at Meta, will lead PhonePe's policy and strategic initiatives.

He will be part of the leadership team at PhonePe and report to cofounders Sameer Nigam and Rahul Chari. *—PTI*

CLIMATE, EMPLOYEE CRISES

Tripura's biggest tea estate's production dwindles

KAILASHAHAR, 15 JULY

The Manu Valley tea estate in Tripura's Unakoti district, which contributes to around one-fourth of the state's total tea output, is facing the brunt of climate change and acute shortage of manpower with its production gradually decreasing in the last three years, an official said on Tuesday.

The northeastern state produces 90 lakh kg of processed tea annually, and the production at the state's largest garden has reduced from 24 lakh kg in 2022 to 22 lakh kg in 2023 and 21 lakh kg in 2024, leaving the management in an uncertain future, he said.

Due to the declining trend in production, the management has stopped producing green tea and is focusing only on the orthodox variety, he said.

According to him, earlier, tea gardens used to receive rainfall from January or February, but now precipitation starts in April.

The scarcity of skilled labourers and their absenteeism are also big challenges to properly running the garden with only 300 coming to work regularly, out of the total 900 registered workers, he said.

Dey said the management has introduced plucking machines to to tide over the labourers' shortage.

Currently, a tea labourer receives a daily wage of Rs 204, apart from PF, bonus, gratuity, medical allowance and free ration to the family. A large number of registered labourers, due to "poor" wages in tea estates, join MGNREGA work or other activities to earn more, which results in a shortage of pluckers, industry sources said. *—PTI*

The management has stopped producing green tea and is focusing only on the orthodox variety *PHOTO: PTI*

Aurobindo to supply HIV drug in over 130 countries

NEW DELHI, 15 JULY

Aurobindo Pharma announced on Tuesday that it will manufacture and supply the long-acting injectable HIV treatment cabotegravir across 133 countries.

The Hyderabad-based drugmaker has been selected as one of the generic manufacturers under the expanded voluntary licensing agreement between the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) and ViiV Healthcare, the company said in a statement.

The agreement allows Aurobindo to manufacture and supply the long-acting injectable HIV treatment across 133 countries, including several low and middle-income markets, it added.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The treatment offers an alternative to daily pills, allowing patients to receive just one injection every one or two months.

This is a significant and timely step towards increasing access to advanced long-acting treatment in LMICs, said Aurobindo Pharma's VC and MD, K Nithyananda Reddy. *—PTI*

Punjab FC sign defender Varghese until 2028

MOHALI, 15 JULY

Punjab FC have signed centre-back Bijoy Varghese from Inter Kashi on a deal running until 2028, ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League season. The 25-year-old began his ISL career with Kerala Blasters in 2021–22 and was part of the squad that finished runners-up. He spent the 2023–24 campaign on loan at Inter Kashi, making 10 appearances last season. Originally from Pulluvila in Thiruvananthapuram, Bijoy began his career at Kovalam FC and trained with the Sports Authority of India. He has also represented Kerala at youth levels. "I'm excited to start this new chapter," said Bijoy. Technical Director Nikolaos Topoliatis called him a "talented defender" who brings depth to the squad *—PTI*

US to face Ecuador, Aus in October football friendlies

FAYETTEVILLE, 15 JULY

The United States will face Ecuador and Australia in international friendlies this October as part of their preparations for the 2026 World Cup. Ranked 15th in the world, the U.S. will play 25th-ranked Ecuador on 10 October in Austin, Texas, and 24th-ranked Australia on 14 October in Commerce City, Colorado, the US Soccer Federation announced. Before that, they take on South Korea on 6 September in New Jersey, followed by Japan on 9 September in Ohio. Following the October matches, the Americans will play two friendlies each in November and March. Coach Mauricio Pochettino's squad will have two send-off games in June ahead of the World Cup in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. *—PTI*

Like US Open, British Open to freeze prize money

PORTURSH, 15 JULY

The British Open is keeping its total prize money at $17 million, marking the first time since 2012 that the R&A hasn't increased the purse. Similarly, the US Open held its purse steady this year at Oakmont. This week's winner at Royal Portrush will earn USD 3.1 million the same as Xander Schauffele received last year at Royal Troon. While recent years saw steady rises across golf's majors, only the Masters and PGA Championship increased prize money in 2025. The U.S. Open still leads with a USD 21.5 million purse. Yet, it's a reminder that the majors remain more about green jackets and claret jugs than cash. The Players Championship offers USD 25 million, with LIV Golf and PGA Tour signature events at USD 20 million. *—PTI*

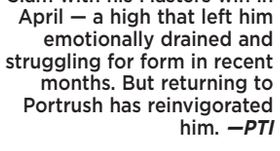


PHOTO: ANI

Rory McIlroy set for emotional return

PORTRUSH, 15 JULY

Rory McIlroy returned to Royal Portrush on Monday for his first practice round ahead of The Open, stepping onto the links for the first time in 2,187 days. Unlike 2019, when he crumbled under emotional pressure and missed the cut by one shot, McIlroy now embraces the homecoming and the adulation from fans — many waving Northern Ireland flags adorned with symbols of all four majors. The 2019 Open was the first held on his home soil in 68 years, and McIlroy admitted he tried to treat it like any other event. "I think in '19 I tried to isolate... it's better if I embrace it," he said. This time, he arrives having completed the career Grand Slam with his Masters win in April — a high that left him emotionally drained and struggling for form in recent months. But returning to Portrush has reinvigorated him. *—PTI*

Archer was bowling to avenge Ganguly's shirt swinging celebrations

The pacer got the matches mixed up as experts, including Ganguly, flay India's technique

LONDON, 15 JULY

England pacer Jofra Archer's inspiration for his game-changing spell against India in the high stakes third Test was Sourav Ganguly's iconic shirt-swinging at the Lord's balcony.

On Monday, Archer, in his first Test appearance since February 2021, removed the dangerous Rishabh Pant with a peach before taking a return catch to dismiss Washington Sundar as India fell short of the target by 22 runs.

England Captain Ben Stokes said that Archer thought he was avenging England for its defeat against India in the NatWest final, where Ganguly took off his shirt in celebration.

"I said to him this morning, 'You know what today is, don't you?'" Stokes said, reminding him of England's 14 July 2019 ODI World Cup victory. He said Archer was watching the NatWest highlights. "He thought that was a World Cup final as well. He thought that was six years today".

King Charles III interacts with Indian cricketer Jasprit Bumrah and others during a meeting with members of the Indian men s and women s cricket teams at the Clarence House, in London, *PHOTO: PTI*

> **You should get some cricket. You are playing for India. You are not here for a cruise**
>
> -Sunil Gavaskar, Former Indian captain, on India's match practice

Meanwhile, experts dissected India's game, noting both technical and strategic lapses.

"Gill did not look as technically tight or calm as usual when he came out to bat on the fourth evening," said former England captain Michael Vaughanin.

Meanwhile, spinning legend Anil Kumble said Ravindra Jadeja should have gone after Shoaib Bashir instead of exposing Mohammed Siraj for three deliveries.

Ganguly, on the other hand, said that India should have won with the kind of quality they had in the dressing room.

"A little bit disappointed with the way India batted in this series, they should have got this 190," remarked Ganguly. "If there was even a little bit of fight from the top, this game would have been India's match".

Meanwhile, left-arm orthodox spinner Liam Dawson returned to England Test set up after a gap of eight years, replacing an injured Bashir for the fourth Test. *—PTI*

Cricket set for Olympic return in Los Angeles in 2028

LOS ANGELES, 15 JULY

Cricket will make a much-anticipated return to the Olympics at the Los Angeles Games, starting on 12 July 2028 at Fairgrounds Stadium, located approximately 50km outside the city. The medal matches are scheduled for 20 and 29 July.

A total of six teams each from both men's and women's sections will compete in the T20 format, totalling 180 players. Notably, this marks cricket's first appearance at the Olympics since it was featured in 1900 in Paris, where only Great Britain and France competed. The organisers have confirmed that there will be no matches on 14 and 21 July, with most matchdays featuring double headers.

With 90 athlete quotas available across both sections, the twelve teams can name 15-member squads. Cricket's rising popularity in the US was evident during the recent 2024 T20 World Cup, which saw matches held in Grand Prairie, Lauderhill, and New York.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has approved cricket alongside other new sports—baseball/softball, flag football, lacrosse (sixes), and squash—for inclusion in the 2028 Games. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass expressed excitement about the upcoming event, emphasising the extensive community engagement ahead of the Games. *—PTI*

India now looks to dominate Eng in ODIs

SOUTHAMPTON, 15 JULY

Following a historic T20I series triumph over England, the Indian women's cricket team is poised to maintain their winning streak as they embark on a three-match ODI series beginning on Wednesday. The team made headlines by securing their first-ever T20I series win against England, clinching the five-match contest 3-2. With the ODI World Cup approaching later this year, captain Harmanpreet Kaur and her squad are eager to enhance their 50-over game.

India's last ODI outing saw them emerge victorious in a Tri-series against Sri Lanka and South Africa in May, and another series win would bolster their confidence ahead of the global event. The team's recent strategy emphasises scoring over 300 runs, a goal the skipper believes provides bowlers with a safety net.

Young opener Pratika Rawal is set to shine once again, having recently become the fastest batter to reach 500 runs in women's ODIs. India's batting line-up boasts depth, with key players such as Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana.

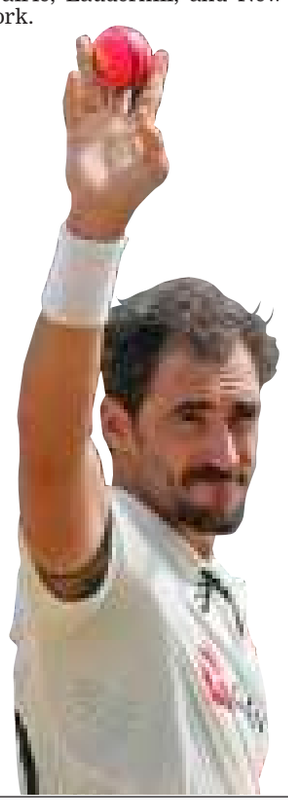
However, the bowling unit faces challenges due to injuries to frontline pacers Titas Sadhu, Renuka Singh, and Pooja Vastrakar. England will welcome back captain Nat Sciver-Brunt and world-class bowler Sophie Ecclestone, both of whom are set to make significant impacts. *—PTI*

The team made headlines by securing their first-ever T20I series win against England, clinching the five-match contest 3-2 *PHOTO: X/BCCI*

- Young opener Pratika Rawal is expected to shine again, having recently become the fastest to 500 runs in women's ODIs. The batting line-up boasts depth, with players like Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana

India to play practices against Eng, NZ ahead of WC

India will play warmup matches against England and New Zealand in Bengaluru, ahead of the Women's ODI World Cup being jointly organised by India and Sri Lanka in September-October this year. India will take on England in the first warmup game on 25 September at BCCI's Centre of Excellence ground and play New Zealand at the Chinnaswamy Stadium on 27 September, three days before the start of the tournament at the same venue on 30 September.



Starc picks 6 for 9 as WI routed for 27

KINGSTON, 15 JULY

Mitchell Starc took six wickets for nine runs and Scott Boland claimed a hat-trick as Australia dismissed the West Indies for 27 – the second-lowest total ever in test cricket – to win the third test by 176 runs on Monday.

The West Indies missed the lowest score in test cricket by one run, due to a misfield.

Starc's first 15 balls delivered the fastest five-wicket haul in test history, and his 15th five-wicket innings in tests. He took a wicket with the first ball of the West Indies' second innings and three wickets in that first over.

Australia needed only 14.3 overs to rout the home team in the first day-night test at Sabina Park and complete a 3-0 series sweep.

"It's been a fantastic series. I think we've seen some difficult batting conditions throughout," said Starc. "It's been a good few days, very enjoyable and I'll go home with a smile on my face." *—PTI*

Michell Starc, in his 100th Test, crossed the **400 Test wicket** mark, and overtook Brett Lee to become the 3rd highest Australian wicket taker across format with 725 international scalps

Madrid signs Carreras from Benfica on a 6-year deal

MADRID/ LONDON, 15 JULY

Real Madrid reached a deal to sign Álvaro Carreras from Benfica on Monday, bringing back the young left back who came through the Spanish club's youth squads.

Madrid said the 22-year-old Carreras is arriving on a six-year contract. Financial details of the transfer were not immediately released.

Carreras played in Madrid's youth academy from 2017-20. The Spaniard joined Benfica from Manchester United after being named the English club's best under-23 player of the 2021-22 season. He won this year's Portuguese League Cup with Benfica.

Carreras will be officially introduced by Madrid on Tuesday.

Madrid was eliminated by Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals of the Club World Cup.

BRENTFORD SIGNS JORDAN HENDERSON

Brentford signed England international Jordan Henderson on a two-year deal and described the midfielder as "one of the most influential leaders" .

Former Liverpool captain Henderson was a free agent after having his contract terminated by Ajax last week.

The 35-year-old Henderson returns to the Premier League after leaving Liverpool for Saudi Arabian team Al-Ettifaq in 2023.

He has won a full set of trophies with Liverpool, including the Premier League and Champions League. *—PTI*

SMARTEST ON THE BLOCK

NBA's Quinten Post wins Chesstival

Dutch basketball player and NBA' Quinten Post after winning the Chesstival, with former Boston Celtics' Rajon Rondo coming second *PHOTO: X/ Golden State Warriors*

LAS VEGAS, 15 JULY

Quinten Post from the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday won the first-ever NBA Chess Championship at the inaugural Chesstival in Las Vegas. Post scored 4.5 out of 5, in five fast-paced rounds.

The event was a crossover co-hosted by Derrick Rose and Freestyle Chess.

Post's impressive show has made him the top chess player in the NBA and a USD 25,000 charity donation to non-profit organisation.

Post displayed remarkable moves, including a stunning rook sacrifice against Chicago Bulls' Tony Snell in the third round. With 4 points, former Boston Celtics point guard Rajon Rondo finished second.

The 10-minute "Head & Hand" knockout tournament had basketball stars and chess grandmasters teaming up. The GMs decides the piece to be played, while the basketball player decides where to move it.

Rose and world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen were defeated in the quarterfinals, just as Rajon Rondo and world No. 2 Hikaru Nakamura. The winners were Grant Williams, Dallas Mavericks forward, and former chess World Championship candidate Judit Polgar. *—Agencies*

- The 10-minute "Head & Hand" knockout tournament saw grandmaster deciding which piece were to be played, while their basketball player teammate decides where to move it

HC STAYS CRICKETER YASH DAYAL'S ARREST IN SEXUAL EXPLOITATION CASE

PRAYAGRAJ, 15 JULY

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday stayed the arrest of cricketer Yash Dayal in connection with an FIR against him for allegedly sexually exploiting a woman.

The court also directed that no coercive action be taken against Dayal, who plays for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), till the next hearing.

Staying his arrest, the court asked state counsel to file a counter affidavit and also issued notices to the complainant to file her counter in the matter.

A division bench comprising Justices Siddhartha Varma and Anil Kumar passed the order on Dayal's petition challenging the FIR.

Dayal has been accused of sexually exploiting a woman on the pretext of marriage. According to the complainant, the two met around five years ago and Dayal had promised to marry her.

The alleged victim also claimed that Dayal kept postponing the matter and she eventually learnt that Dayal was involved with other women.

The petitioner's counsel submitted that a person can be accused of an offence under Section 69 of BNS only if it is established that he makes a promise to marry to a woman without any intention to fulfill it. However, she kept silent until he was selected to the Indian team, the council argued. *—PTI*